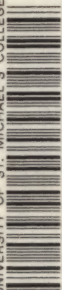


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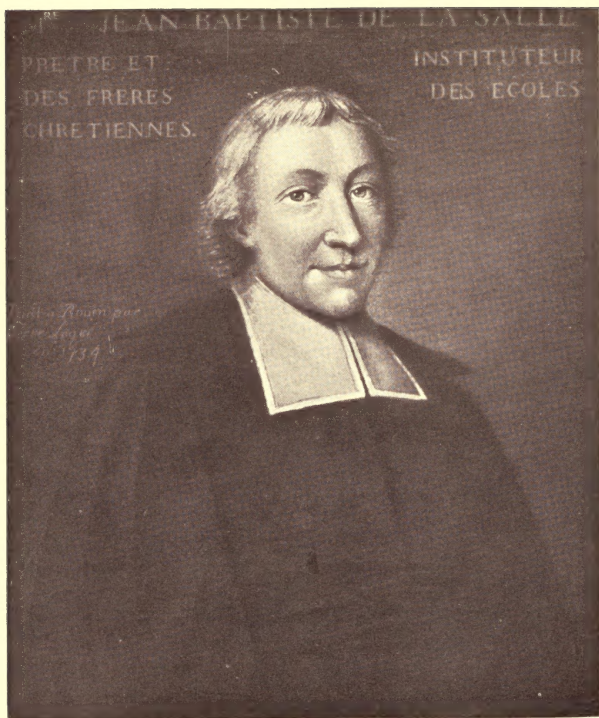
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ONTARIO

LIFE AND VIRTUES

OF

ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE



ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

Founder of the Institute
of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Life and Virtues
of
St. John Baptist
De La Salle

FOUNDER OF THE INSTITUTE
OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

BY
J. GUIBERT, S. S.

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PREFACE

This book has no scientific pretensions; its aim is chiefly to edify the reader. Not that in writing it we set no great value on historic exactitude, for a narrative is never more wholesome to the soul than when it is very truthful. But, whilst following the way traced by our Histoire de St. John Baptist De La Salle, published last year on the very day of the canonization of our dear Saint, we have simplified our work by avoiding all display of erudition: notes, documents, references, discussions, all have been omitted in this book. The reader who is desirous of making a more profound study of the subject that we are sketching in these pages, will find all necessary matter in our Histoire, to which we refer him.

At the same time, we have not contented ourselves with a hurried view of the apostolic career of

St. John Baptist De La Salle. After having followed him through the vicissitudes of a very active existence, we have taken time to study his personal physiognomy, endeavouring to fix the traits which characterize the man, the Christian, the apostle and the founder of a religious Order. For this reason we decided upon selecting the title : Life and Virtues.

May these humble pages make known a Saint who merited so well of the Church and the nations, who endowed the Church with a religious Order as fervent as it is flourishing, and who so powerfully concurred in developing in France the educational works whence it derives its glory and its power.

J. G.

Paris, March 19th 1901.

LIFE AND VIRTUES
OF
ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

CHAPTER I.

EDUCATION

1651-1678

CHILDHOOD OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

1651-1660

The holy founder of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was born at Rheims April 30th 1651. The parents of the predestined child, Louis De La Salle and Nicolle Moët de Brouillet, belonged to the most respectable social and religious circles of Champagne. With the worldly goods which he was one day to sacrifice so nobly, he received in his birth the precious heritage of honour, faith and virtue.

Indeed, the La Salles enjoyed at Rheims, along with the Colberts, the highest esteem. Being descended, according to a trustworthy tradition, from the illustrious house of De La Salle which, in the Middle Ages, set out

from Catalonia or Béarn and settled all over France, they were established in Champagne since the middle of the fourteenth century. Their coat of arms, " three broken chevrons of gold on an azure field ", recalled an old legend, according to which an ancestor, John Salla, had his legs broken by a shiver of stone when fighting by the side of Alphonsus the Chaste, in the year 818. The younger branch from which our Saint sprang, had been obliged to embark in commerce during the sixteenth century, and, without departing from the strictest honesty, it had acquired great riches, and a preponderating influence in the city of Rheims.

Among the ancestors of John Baptist there stands out a more salient figure, that of Lancelot De La Salle, a merchant and counsellor of the city, whose power gave umbrage to the partisans of the *Ligue*. Being accused of Protestantism and cast into prison in 1575, Lancelot proved his Catholicity and his virtues as a citizen. One of the witnesses at the trial tells us that " the said De La Salle is hospitable, lavish of his alms and compassionate to the poor whom he sees often ; he supports poor children at school, and afterwards places them as apprentices at his own expense, and he is loved by the good. " This is a glorious testimony which shows in the germ in this ancestor, the virtues that will shine with such extraordinary lustre in the great-grandson.

The Moëts De Brouillet were worthy of alliance with the La Salles. Belonging to an ancien nobility of the gown, they discharged with integrity the duties of the magistracy and gave the people an example of lively piety. John Moët, the maternal grandfather of our Saint, daily recited the whole of the canonical office, and drew from communing with God that life of faith which

he imparted in so intense a degree to his grandson. For, with his wife Perrette Lespagnol, he exercised the happiest influence on the education of John Baptist.

It was in 1650 that the La Salles and the Moëts De Brouillet, already allied by friendship, contracted a closer union by the marriage of Louis De La Salle, a counsellor at the presidial court of Rheims, aged twenty-five years, with Nicolle Moët De Brouillet, aged seventeen years. Louis De La Salle then lived with his brother Simon, at the *hôtel de la Cloche*, a large town mansion which, even at the present time, compares well with modern buildings, and which is situated in the rue de l'Arbalète, near the place du Marché, and which an inscription points out to the people of Rheims and strangers as one of the most precious relics of the ancient city. For, it was here that John Baptist De La Salle, the glorious founder of a powerful Institute, the intelligent and devoted educator of the people, the venerated Saint whom the Church has just raised to the altars, was born.

God blessed the union of Louis De La Salle and Nicolle Moët with ten children, three of whom died at an early age. Of the seven others, three entered Holy Orders: John Baptist, Jacques-Joseph and Louis; Rose-Marie became a religious; Marie, Remy and Pierre entered the state of marriage and left posterity.

John Baptist was the eldest of this numerous family, and he was to become its glory. On the very day of his birth, grace took possession of his soul by holy Baptism, and we have every reason to believe that it was never banished therefrom by mortal sin.

No extraordinary events marked the early years of this blessed child; besides, it was characteristic of his

existence to be less distinguished by the lustre of miracles than by the depth and continuity of his solid virtues. Yet, his character early manifested itself and gave indications of his being called to great things.

Piety was one of his first traits. Instinctively, this young soul turned to God. As soon as he was taken to church, he manifested a taste for the ceremonies of religion; having returned home, he took pleasure in reproducing what he had seen. In the little oratory which his parents had to arrange for him, he enjoyed being the priest of his chapel, to ascend the altar and imitate the august mystery of the Mass. And it was not a simple childish amusement for John Baptist, for he performed these acts with all the recollection and religious spirit of which he was capable. If he sometimes escaped from the vigilance of his parents, it was not to play with comrades, but to go to church to pray, and follow the Divine Office. There they found him recollected, attentive, and in that attitude of respect and prayer which he was to preserve in church during the whole course of his life.

He was but seven or eight years of age when, by dint of entreaties, he obtained permission from his parents to exercise the functions of altar boy. When he served the priest at the altar, which was a high honour in his estimation, he acquitted himself of this office with so much grace and fervour, that, in the words of his biographer, "he attracted the attention of all the assistants, and inspired those with devotion who beheld him."

To this lively piety, he joined precocious maturity and thoughtful gravity. And, indeed, he had but little inclination for the usual amusements of children; religious objects were his toys, and religious practices the

only distractions he loved. On a certain day, when a family feast had assembled a joyful party of relatives at the *hôtel de la Cloche*, John Baptist was suddenly seized with a deep feeling of *ennui* at the noise and amusements around him; taking refuge near his venerable grandmother Perrette Lespagnol, he took her aside and besought her to read for him the *Lives of the Saints*.

As much as he loved church song, so much did he abhor profane music. His father, who was a man of distinction and a friend of art, wishing doubtless to give John Baptist a more complete liberal education, endeavoured in vain to give him a taste for music. Either because of a lack of artistic talent or through a spirit of mortification, the child did not respond on this point to the efforts of Louis De La Salle.

It was quite otherwise with his studies. For, an old biographer tells us of John Baptist, “ that he cheerfully took to everything that a faithful, virtuous tutor prescribed, and he was not long in acquiring the necessary knowledge to go to college. ” Indeed we believe that he did not go to the *petites écoles*, but that his father kept him to “ bring him up under his own eyes ”, until he should attain the requisite age to begin his classical studies.

JOHN BAPTIST AT THE COLLEGE DES BONS-ENFANTS. —

HE ENTERS THE CLERICAL STATE. —

HE BECOMES A CANON OF RHEIMS

1660-1669

John Baptist was nine years of age when he was placed at the *Collège des Bons-Enfants*, of the University of

Rheims. There he pursued the whole course of studies ; consequently, he devoted five years to grammar, two to literature, poetry and rhetoric, and two to philosophy.

While following the course at the college, he remained under the vigilant guardianship of his parents, being an extern student. Thanks to their daily influence, thanks to the wholesome joyfulness found in his family, he preserved all the glow of his piety, purity of conscience and the sweet gravity of his character.

Besides, the University did not then imperil the faith or the virtue of children. It was not then an *œuvre laïque*, in the modern sense of the word ; being directed by the clergy themselves, the spirit that pervaded it was eminently religious. Whilst forming their literary taste by familiarizing them with the great authors of Greece and Rome, the young men, solidly instructed in their religion and profoundly impressed with the spirit of faith of their social surroundings, lived up to it and considered the fables of mythology only as subjects for scholastic exercise. Besides, nothing was spared for the protection of the pupils : the regulations of the college prescribed religious exercises, instructions in catechism and sermons, as well as means of discipline to safeguard virtue.

Under the twofold action of a vigilant family and a catholic college, the fervour of John Baptist only increased. He was not yet eleven years old, when he heard the call of God and made it known without delay to his parents. Of what consequence was the world with its riches and honours to him ? The promises of a future had no attractions for him, because God had spoken to his heart. He was not willing to leave the

sanctuary which he loved ; he desired always to enjoy the divine office in which he already participated ; he wished never to be deprived of his intimate union with God by prayer which constituted his happiness. In order to cast his career where his heart was already fixed, he solicited the favour of being admitted among the clergy by receiving the tonsure.

Such a proposal would have thrown into consternation a less religious family than that of John Baptist. Wealthy families, certainly, did not refuse to give their children to the Church ; but the recognized custom of the time destined the younger children for the priesthood, and reserved the elder ones to sustain in the world the glory of the name and the prestige of fortune of the family. Entrance into the ecclesiastical state of the eldest of the family was very unusual. What was Louis De La Salle to answer his son ? If there was a struggle in this soul so thoroughly pervaded with faith, the religious spirit triumphed over that of the world, and the tyranny of custom was overcome by the generous inspiration of a great heart. This immolation of paternal self-love was so much the more meritorious, as the glorious destinies of the child could not yet be surmised. Now we see that God returned a hundredfold what he had received ; for, this child who sought only the pious obscurity of the sanctuary, illustrated the name of the La Salles with a brilliant aureola lasting through the ages.

It was on March 11th 1662 that John Baptist De La Salle received the tonsure in the chapel of the archiepiscopal palace of Rheims. The conferring of the tonsure at the age of eleven years was not unusual in the seventeenth century ; it did not entail any engagement

for the future, but simply indicated the desire of a youth to give himself to God on attaining a ripe age. But, however young, John Baptist had sentiments in harmony with the holy profession of the priesthood. The sacred formula that he pronounced was not in vain for him ; for, in saying to God : “ The Lord is the portion of my inheritance ”, he already made in his heart all the sacrifices that God would ask of him one day. And he gave to God pledges of his generosity by a continued increase of piety, by greater and greater assiduity at church and at the liturgical offices, and by a reserve that showed in him a youth vowed to God.

His parents might have availed themselves of his entrance into Orders to solicit some rich ecclesiastical benefice in his favour. They did nothing of the sort, so much were they disinterested for their part in the matter of the gift offered to God in the person of their son. It was only five years later that a canonicate was conferred on John Baptist De La Salle in the cathedral of Rheims.

Canon Dozet, his relative, Archdeacon of Champagne and chancellor of the University, carefully followed the progress of the young cleric. The rare piety which did not belie itself ; the irreproachable behaviour indicating great moral worth ; incontestable talent which set off the young student among the best students of the University, disposed this wise old man to resign his benefice in favour of John Baptist. On Easter Day 1666, in a solemn session of the University, when he heard his name pronounced among the laureates of the College, he was convinced that his prebend could not be bestowed in favour of a cleric that was more deserving or inspired richer hopes. On January 7th following, young

Canon De La Salle was installed in the choir of Notre-Dame of Rheims.

He was becoming a member of an illustrious body that had given many Bishops, great Popes and Saints to the Church. But, far from glorying in it, he thought only of worthily discharging this august ministry of the divine office. Looking upon himself as consecrated by his state to public prayer, he felt that the divine praises should be so much the more pure and fervent on his lips inasmuch as he sang them in the name of the Church and of all mankind.

“Remember”, said Canon Dozet to him, “that a Canon should live like a Carthusian, spending his life in retirement and solitude.” Faithfully practising these lessons, the young Canon soon became the admiration of his colleagues by his fervour and exactitude. “He is for us”, said one of them, “a model of regularity, of modesty and candour.”

His title of Canon invited him to fix himself in the ecclesiastical state and to take another step towards the priesthood. Besides, he had only to follow his personal attraction to ask for Minor Orders, which he received on March 17th 1668.

He was then a student in philosophy, and the end of his course of studies was approaching. When he had crowned them with the Degree of Master of Arts on July 10th 1669, he began his course of theology without the least hesitation, and followed it for a whole year at the School of Theology of the University of Rheims.

But his father, a thoughtful man, followed the intellectual and moral progress of John Baptist too attentively not to understand the merits of the young man and what might be expected from him in the future. Being

the guardian of the gifts that God had conferred on this chosen soul, he understood that his first duty was to improve them, and he deserves thanks for having selected, for the completion of his son's education, the two most celebrated schools then in France, the Sorbonne and Saint-Sulpice.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE FOLLOWS THE COURSE
OF THE SORBONNE
AND FORMS HIMSELF TO THE PRACTICE
OF THE SACERDOTAL VIRTUES
IN THE SEMINARY OF SAINT-SULPICE

1670-1672

The Sorbonne was looked upon in the whole Church as the first among the Schools of Theology, as well for the solidity of its teachings and the reliability of its decisions, as for the merit of its Doctors and the value of the degrees it conferred. John Baptist followed the courses assiduously, and he would have pursued his studies until he had attained the degree of Doctor, if family trials had not interrupted them at the end of eighteen months.

It was at the school of the most illustrious masters that France then possessed that he contracted that love of study which, in spite of a multitude of affairs, made him apply himself all his lifetime to intellectual work. There were developed the dominating qualities of his mind: order, clearness and firmness of exposition, which revealed themselves later on in so striking a manner in his conduct and in his books. The very strong oppo-

sition which, at that time, the Faculty of the Sorbonne manifested with regard to the doctrines of Jansenius, fixed his mind in fidelity to the Roman Church towards which his heart was already inclined. Thus, his sejour in Paris was not less profitable to the purity of his faith than to the solidity of his knowledge.

But his virtue there gained still more. For the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, where he enclosed himself in an austere and recollected solitude, placed the seal on his religious training which had been already so much advanced by happy family influences.

In fact, his new surroundings offered him all the means of sanctification. The seminary, still penetrated with the memory and the graces of its founder, had not lost any of its first fervour. Besides M. De Bretonvilliers, the faithful guardian of the spirit and authority of M. Olier, there was M. Tronson, as learned as he was modest, a profound psychologist and at the same time an enlightened theologian, whose name stands out so prominently in the education of the clergy of the 17th century. This eminent man whose counsel was sought by the whole Church of France, was the spiritual director to whom John Baptist confided the care of his conscience and the cultivation of his will.

Among his fellow-students, the young Canon had the happiness of forming advantageous friendships; we shall mention only Fénelon and Paul Godet Des Marais, both called to occupy considerable positions at the court, one in connection with the Duke de Bourgogne, and the other with Madame De Maintenon, whose adviser he became. But no one attached himself more closely to him than Jacques Bäu hin, a converted Calvinist, who was the admiration of all by his lively piety, his morti-

fication and humility. Twenty years later, John Baptist placed himself under his direction and found in him, in the first tribulations of a founder, a most supernatural and comforting counsellor.

Under the beneficent action of this novitiate, where "nothing hard was discouraging", where exact discipline allied itself with an easy deportment and urbanity of manners in all relations, where the most austere Christian virtues harmonized with the expansive effusions of piety, the young seminarian acquired that temper of soul which characterized him, and which presents a marvellous harmony of meekness and strength, and of mastery of the will with vivacity of sentiment.

However, his virtue remained as hidden as it was profound. Could it be otherwise in an assembly of select, thoughtful, fervent men, who, according to a Memorial of the time, stood less in need of being spurred on to advance than of being held to a moderate pace? For, in well-regulated communities, if any one attracts attention, it is usually less by serious qualities than by accidental peculiarities of character. One so well balanced in character as John Baptist was to be passed over unobserved. However, his worth did not escape the penetrating notice of his masters, as we learn from the testimony given by M. Leschassier fifty years later.

The superior of Saint-Sulpice wrote in 1720, that "he was, in the first place, an observer of the rule, and very exact in the performance of the community exercises. Soon he appeared more detached from the world than he had been in entering. His conversation was always gentle and becoming. He appeared to me never to have displeased anyone, or to have drawn on himself any censure. When he came to Paris for his studies, I noticed

in him a marvellous progress in all virtues. All who knew him, saw the marks thereof in his whole conduct, especially in the patience with which he suffered contempt and other trials. ”

This irreproachable seminarian in whom were germinating obscurely but in an active manner virtues one day to bloom profusely in broad daylight, could not fail to imbibe the apostolic zeal which then animated the young clerics of Saint-Sulpice. The seminary, in fact, shared in the parochial work with regard to the teaching of catechism and the care of the *petites écoles*, and the most noble works abroad awakened in them efficacious sympathies.

No question at that period engrossed thoughtful minds in a more lively manner than the instruction of the popular classes in charity schools; either through pity for the multitudes sunk in ignorance and vice in consequence of lacking means to frequent pay-schools, or through fear of the excesses to which a populace not imbued with religious sentiments might give itself up, everywhere the talk was of instructing the poor and imbuing them with religious sentiments.

Already had M. Bourdoise, the zealous pastor of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, written to M. Olier these words which have become memorable in the history of the Christian Schools: “ As to myself, I say it with all my heart, I should gladly beg from door to door in order to provide for a real schoolmaster. Like St. Francis Xavier, I should ask all the Universities of Europe for men willing, not to go to Japan or India to preach to pagans, but at least to begin so good a work. ” On the other hand, M. Demia, in a book entitled *Remontrances*, which had attracted much attention, had

pointed out to the aldermen of Lyons the disorders that resulted from a lack of schools for poor children.

These ideas were taken up at Saint-Sulpice, and, at the time when John Baptist lived there, all the students were enrolled in an association founded by M. Bourdoise in 1649, and having for its object to obtain Christian teachers for children. The young Canon of Rheims doubtless participated in the prayers and aspirations of his fellow-students. And if it be true that in spite of ourselves, our real life becomes the development of the germs placed in our souls by education, we must recognize that Saint-Sulpice was for John Baptist De La Salle the cradle of his vocation.

He would have been pleased to live many years in this blessed house; but he was violently dragged away from it by cruel trials. The death of his mother, which happened July 19th 1671, was the first wound inflicted on his filial heart; and his tears had hardly dried when he lost his father on April 9th 1672. Though his grief was great, instead of abandoning himself to it, he was obliged to set out immediately for Rheims, in order to take hold of the direction of the affairs of the family. He had entered Saint-Sulpice October 18th 1670, and left it April 19th 1672. The precious leaven that he bore away in his heart was to ferment during six years of prayer, labour and solitude. Then, when God's time manifested itself, the apostle was ready for his mission.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE TAKES CARE OF HIS FAMILY
HE DEVOTES HIMSELF TO STUDY AND TAKES PART
IN WORKS. — HE RECEIVES HOLY ORDERS. —
THE PRIESTHOOD
1672-1678

John Baptist De La Salle, the eldest of the orphans, understood that he was to be their father, and he took to heart the noble task of bringing up his four brothers and two sisters in piety, in refinement and learning.

He acted powerfully on their souls by the example of his own life. Being accustomed to regularity in the seminary, he made his house a sort of community. From early rising and religious exercises to the meals the recreations and the studies, everything was done at an appointed time. He drew from his piety the courage to perform all his duties, and he found the sustenance of his piety in the very obligations of his canonicate. For he was not less inclined to the public offices of the Church than to private meditation and intimate communion with God.

This regular life, monotonous though it was, never became a burden for his brothers, so tender and communicative was his affection that it prevented or overcame all weariness. In this warm atmosphere of piety of which John Baptist was the living source, his brothers and sisters grew up in union, religion and work. He had the happiness of seeing three vocations developed under his roof; for, as we have already said, Rose-Marie entered the convent of Saint-Étienne at

Rheims, Jacques-Joseph and Louis became priests. The others founded truly Christian families in the world.

John Baptist, not satisfied with watching over their souls, also managed their temporal affairs with care, and, according to a biographer, the skill which he manifested in these temporal questions, might have given reason to the belief that " he was made for such business. " It was thus that Providence was pleased to mature its young servant, by exercising him, in the shadow of his paternal house, to conduct souls and manage weighty interests. If he appeared to lose time in these family preoccupations, the truth is, that he thus acquired consummate experience, and developed a wisdom the happy fruits of which were soon to be appreciated.

In spite of his love for study and his fidelity to follow the lessons of the University of Rheims, his examinations dragged along tediously ; we do not know at what time he underwent the examination for the degree of Bachelor, but he obtained his Licentiate only towards the end of 1677. Another interval of at least three years elapsed before he obtained the degree of Doctor ; but he took it to heart, through respect for his dignity as a cleric and Canon, and not through ambition, to go through the complete course of ecclesiastical studies, and thus to raise his whole soul to the level of his sublime vocation.

And still, he did not hesitate to add new cares to those of head of a family, Canon and student ; he allowed himself to be persuaded by Nicolas Roland into works of zeal.

Nicolas Roland, a Canon and lecturer on divinity of Rheims, an ardent soul, who was ready for any under-

taking, followed up among others, a work for young clerics, a weekly conference for priests, the direction of an orphan asylum, the creation of popular schools for poor girls and a sodality for lady teachers. On his return from Paris, John Baptist De La Salle took this apostolic man as the director of his conscience, and he received from him, although in a more poised soul, lively impulsions for works of zeal. Exhausted in the flower of his age by excessive labours, Nicolas Roland, who foresaw his approaching death, ardently desired to make Canon De La Salle the heir of his works as well as of his spirit: docile to the lessons of so holy a master, John Baptist initiated himself into these new forms of apostolate and thus prepared himself for the future to become, with a wisdom that never failed, a happy innovator.

However he ascended the steps of the altar but slowly and, as it were, with fear. Notwithstanding the overwhelming doubts about his vocation which troubled him at the death of his parents, he had resolutely taken the definitive engagements of the subdeaconship on the formal invitation of M. Tronson and M. Roland, on June 2nd 1672; but he received deaconship only four years later, on March 21st 1676, and he allowed two more years to pass before ordination to the priesthood. Doubtless, young clerics then were not so hurried as today to receive Holy Orders, either because their maintenance was assured by benefices, or because the ranks of the clergy were abundantly provided for. Besides, having once placed between himself and the world the insurmountable barrier of the subdeaconship, he had never regretted devoting himself to God in the sacerdotal state. We believe that his delicacy of conscience

was the sole cause of these delays; like so many other Saints, he dreaded a dignity before which even St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome and St. Augustine had trembled, and of which St. Vincent of Paul said with humility: "Had I known what a priest is, I should never have consented to become one."

When he was ordained deacon in 1676, Canon De La Salle, following the advice of Nicolas Roland, undertook to exchange his rich canonicate for a benefice with a charge of souls attached thereto. It appeared to him that an active ministry would correspond better with the aspirations of his zeal than the sedentary obligations of his canonicate. He had already made arrangements with the parish priest of Saint-Pierre, when the Archbishop of Rheims, Maurice Le Tellier, who was on this occasion the happy instrument of Providence, refused his consent, ordered the negotiations to be stopped, and thus reserved John Baptist for his future mission.

Our Saint, who sought only the will of God, bowed before the decision of his superior, and whilst further pursuing his studies, prepared himself for the priesthood.

It was on Holy Saturday April 9th 1678, that John Baptist De La Salle received the priestly unction at the hands of his Archbishop, in the metropolitan church of Rheims. In order to enjoy the gift of God more freely, he wished to say his first Mass without éclat, his relatives alone present, in a humble chapel of the cathedral. What happened in this first meeting at the altar between God and His servant? No witness of the time has preserved the memory thereof for us; the humility of the Saint chose to bury it in oblivion. But his whole life as a priest speaks loudly enough, and we

can judge of the first day by all those which followed. Thenceforward, the Mass was to be the centre of his existence; he could not live a day without celebrating, and he knew how to stand even the most painful infirmities, in order to offer the august sacrifice. As passionately as he was attached to poverty, he never found the vestments too rich or the altars too well decorated; and his vestments and sacred vessels, preserved in the treasury of Rheims, prove that, with regard to the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, he went even to prodigality. And what a respectful attitude before the altar! What angelic radiance on his countenance in his contact with God! And then, what recollection in his act of thanksgiving, even so far as to lose the use of his senses! And how his words, issuing from a heart replenished with God, penetrated the souls that then addressed themselves to him!

Once in possession as a priest of the source of life which the Eucharist is, John Baptist De La Salle will now engage himself, never to depart therefrom, in the providential mission for which he was marked out by God.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST SCHOOLS

1678-1682

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE CONSOLIDATES THE WORK OF
NICOLAS ROLAND

1678

The life of John Baptist De La Salle unfolded itself in perfect unity. Until the day of his ordination, he lived a hidden life, he seemed to live only for himself and did not even surmise his mission; he prepared himself only to do the will of God. Hardly had he been ordained, when the designs of God became manifest; he applied himself without a moment's rest to the great work of popular education, and, during the forty-one years of his priesthood, he laboured only at this most important work. The way that he entered was hard and strewn with a multitude of obstacles; he sprinkled it with his tears and his blood; he drank the chalice of humiliation to the dregs; but he did not deviate from it for a moment, and being a pioneer as intrepid as he was

patient, he opened up new roads which others followed after him.

God began by testing his courage and aptitude in the establishment of the work of Nicolas Roland.

The zealous divine of Rheims, worn out by the excess of his mortifications and labours, survived the ordination of his dear disciple only eighteen days. By his Will and Testament, he made John Baptist his Executor, and confided to him the delicate mission of establishing on a solid basis the cherished work of his life, a work that was to preserve in Rheims his name and the veneration of his memory, that is, the Congregation of the *Holy Child Jesus*.

Being penetrated with the sentiments which then were fermenting in the best of souls, Nicolas Roland had, in 1670, established gratuitous schools for poor children who were refused in pay-schools. He had copied from the schools he had seen at Rouen, and it was from Rouen also that had come to him the first religious, Françoise Duval, who had become a school-mistress. In a few years, gratuitous schools for girls were established in the different quarters of the city. Pious persons, animated with holy zeal, joined Françoise Duval, shared in her work, and uniting themselves in a secular Congregation, took the title of *Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus*.

Being carried off by death too soon, Nicolas Roland had not obtained official recognition for his school-mistresses. His work would soon have crumbled, if it had not been promptly placed on a solid basis by being legalized; he had committed the task of doing this to John Baptist De La Salle.

The mission was extremely delicate. It was neces-

sary to obtain the consent of the Archbishop, who had never been in sympathy with Nicolas Roland and had often refused him; it was necessary to overcome the opposition of the City Council, which saw in the new Congregation only an additional burden for the people to bear; finally, Letters Patent had to be obtained from the King.

Whatever repugnance he experienced for the external and distracting work which this matter necessitated, John Baptist undertook it through respect and love for Nicolas Roland. By his amiable and polite manners, and thanks to his freedom with the most influential persons, that the social position of his family procured for him, he soon won the good will of the Archbishop and the support of his council. Maurice Le Tellier went so far as to place at the service of this cause the great credit he enjoyed at the court of Louis XIV., being the brother of the minister Louvois, and he also helped it with the resources of his immense fortune. So great was the diligence brought to the execution of this undertaking, that Letters Patent authorizing the Congregation of the *Holy Child Jesus* were granted and registered as early as the month of February 1679.

The humble daughters of Nicolas Roland were convinced by the facts that not only had the soul of their father remained among them to protect them, but also that he had given them a visible support who was not less skilful than pious and wise. Hence they would have been pleased to have him for superior; but the Archbishop found him too young and appointed another, so that John Baptist kept up no other relations with them than those of friendship and edification. It was God himself who reserved him for something greater.

MADAME MAILLEFER SENDS NYEL TO RHEIMS. —
FOUNDATION OF THE SCHOOL OF SAINT-MAURICE

1679

Happy to have complied with the last wishes of Nicolas Roland, John Baptist De La Salle thought only of resuming his studies and the duties of his canonicate. Too modest to attribute any mission to himself, he did not form any project. If he engaged in a new undertaking, it was because God urged him to it; besides, he explained himself clearly on this subject.

He said: "I never thought of it... Even if I had ever believed that the care I was taking of the schoolmasters through pure charity, should ever make it a duty for me to live with them, I should have abandoned it... God, who conducts all things with wisdom and kindness, and who is not accustomed to force the inclinations of men, wishing to engage me to take entire charge of the schools, did it in an imperceptible manner, and with much time, so that one engagement led me to another, without my perceiving it at the beginning."

These easy and imperceptible ways by which God led this humble and docile soul to one of the greatest works accomplished in the Church will be recognized by the reader as he peruses these pages.

The vigorous religious impulsion of the seventeenth century had brought about the creation of primary schools in nearly all the parishes of France. Being under ecclesiastical jurisdiction, these schools gave equal attention to the development of the mind and to

the religious formation of the heart. But frequently, especially in the cities, the poor children were neglected. Either they had no admittance to the pay-schools, or there was no zeal shown to have them received. Hence they continued roaming about the streets, exposed to all the vices engendered by ignorance and vagrancy. In some cities, especially in Paris, charity schools had been established for them. But these schools were rare; they lacked teachers and resources; order especially was so much lacking, that they were less classes than clamorous multitudes of children. Popular education therefore awaited a creator and legislator. —

The reform movement set out from Rouen, where, as early as the middle of the sixteenth century, charitable schools had been opened by the Bureau of the Hospital. Two choice souls had been labouring there in concert for the education of the poor since 1662: the Rev. Father Barré, a Minim, whose sacred memory is held in benediction, established gratuitous schools for girls, and founded an Institute of teaching religious, whilst Madame Maillefer, in order to expiate by penance and works of zeal a youth passed in effeminacy and vain show, consecrated her time and fortune to the maintenance of the teachers, male and female, of Christian schools.

Madame Maillefer, whose maiden name was Dubois, was born at Rheims, and had resolved to procure for her native city the benefit of popular education and to save the poor children of Rheims as she had saved those of Rouen. She had already in 1670, in concert with the Rev. Father Barré, brought about the foundation of schools for girls by sending Françoise Duval to Nicolas Roland. In 1679, she believed that the providential moment had arrived to begin schools for boys also.

In order to realize this object, she cast her eyes on a man of devotedness, ready for anything, under the name of Brother Gabriel, who for twenty-seven years had been conducting the charity schools of Rouen. His name was Adrian Nyel. He was a native of Laonnois in the Beauvais district, and at this time, fifty-five years of age. With the simplicity of a child, he complied with the desire of Madame Maillefer and set out, with a boy of the age of fourteen, to establish a charity school for boys at Rheims. Nyel did not surmise all the consequences of his mission. He believed himself to be sent by Madame Maillefer, but he was in reality the messenger of Providence. He set out to establish a school, and God made use of him to draw a Saint out of solitude and obscurity, in order to bring about the creation of a powerful Institute. Like a shepherd in the mountain, raising a clod with his crook, and causing a spring to burst forth which becomes stronger in its course and pours out on the plain a majestic river.

Having arrived at Rheims, Nyel at first presented himself to the superior of the convent of the Child Jesus. He was to make known his mission to Françoise Duval, take the advice of Canon De La Salle, and, pending the success of the enterprise, stop with the brother of Madame Maillefer.

Françoise Duval received him kindly; she knew and appreciated him; she was ready to help him in establishing a school for boys. But as much as she desired the work, so much did she apprehend its failure. How many prejudices were to be dispelled and difficulties overcome! Her first thought was to consult Canon De La Salle.

It just happened that John Baptist was in the house.

Nyel and he had crossed the threshold of the convent of the Child Jesus at the same time. The pious Canon listened silently to M. Nyel. He admired the courage of Madame Maillefer, who sent this man and this boy to establish a new school at Rheims, and who promised three hundred livres a year for its support. What would the magistrates think? What would the clergy say? How would the Archbishop look on it? In face of these questions, it was necessary to take time, to pray and reflect, and not to take any steps that might compromise the project. John Baptist thought that it would be prudent to bring Nyel and his companion to his house. "Come and stop with me," said he, "as my house is a hospice, where country priests and ecclesiastics, who are my friends, are wont to lodge; it is quite well adapted to receive you and conceal your design from the public. By your external appearance you will be taken for a priest from the country..." By receiving Nyel into his house, M. De LaSalle made a first step; he was not to depart from the way he had entered.

He began by consulting God in prayer; he then sought light in the counsel of the most holy and enlightened men of Rheims, such as Jacques Callou, superior of the seminary, and Dom Claude of Brittany, prior of the Abbey of Saint-Remy; he even went so far as to hold a meeting in his house of the most zealous and prudent ecclesiastics of the city, so that the question might be duly examined. The resolution adopted by the assembly was that which John Baptist himself had proposed; so evident was it from the beginning that the spirit of a founder animated him. The new school was to be placed "under the protection of a parish priest zealous enough to take charge of it, discreet enough not

to betray the secret, and generous enough to support the undertaking." M. Dorigny, parish priest of Saint-Maurice, appeared to have all these qualities; and to him M. De La Salle addressed himself without delay. Never were advances better received; for, the parish priest of Saint-Maurice, desirous of establishing a charity school for the poor of his parish, was looking for a teacher to take charge of it. An understanding was quickly arrived at. "The only condition that we ask for in this matter", said M. De La Salle, "is that you shall appear to be the founder of the school, and to lend it your name. Nearly all your parishioners are poor, you owe them an education which they cannot procure for themselves; you will have Nyel and his little companion to teach them; we recommend them in this capacity. Take them as your own, and, when an opportunity presents itself, make it appear as if you had set them to work for the education of your parishioners."

It was wise at this period to take such prudent measures in opening a charity school; for, the teachers of pay-schools, who were very jealous of their rights, looked with suspicion on every rival undertaking, and mercilessly prosecuted it. They only tolerated that parish priests, solicitous for the instruction of the poor of their parishes, should open gratuitous schools for them alone.

The matter was so promptly and so happily arranged, that M. Dorigny received Nyel and his companion into his own house for the three hundred livres of Madame Maillefer, and the school was opened on April 15th 1679.

This school of Saint-Maurice is properly considered as the first school of the Institute of the Brothers. If its walls have disappeared, the remembrance of it has

been preserved by a monument erected in the church of Saint-Maurice to the glory of Canon De La Salle.

Far from attributing to himself any of the merit of this foundation, John Baptist, on the contrary, left the newly-begun work in the hands of M. Nyel and the parish priest of Saint-Maurice. Believing that God now required no more from him with regard to this undertaking, he, in all simplicity, returned to the duties of his canonicate. But Providence, that had chosen him for an important design, soon drew him from the hidden life where he wished to confine himself.

THE SCHOOL OF SAINT-JACQUES AND THE SCHOOL
OF SAINT-SYMPHORIEN.—
HOW JOHN BAPTIST WAS LED TO DIRECT
THE TEACHERS

1679-1680

The new school soon attracted the attention of the inhabitants of Rheims. As it had received poor children until then addicted to vagrancy and vice, it had procured tranquillity and moral salubrity to the suburb of Saint-Maurice. The two teachers who were precious helps to the parish priest taught, besides reading and ciphering, the Christian doctrine and good manners, so that in a short time the place assumed a changed aspect.

Being informed of these happy results, and being convinced that no work has more lasting consequences than the education of children, a pious widow of the parish of Saint-Jacques, Madame Lévêque De Croyère,

resolved to procure for the poor of her parish the same benefit. Feeling that her end was drawing near, she called for Canon De La Salle, and earnestly requested him to undertake the work, and promised him an annuity of five hundred livres for that purpose. "I must", she said, "profit by so favourable an occasion; for it is long since God made me think of founding a school in my parish, and I am very happy to see it realized before my death." The pious foundress died before the opening of the school; but the annuity which she had guaranteed was always paid exactly.

Meanwhile, Nyel had set about looking for help, and had found three young men, willing to aid in the work. The school of Saint-Jacques was opened in the month of September 1679.

Not content with directing these negotiations, M. De La Salle found himself obliged to take care of the teachers. As a matter of fact, M. Dorigny, who now had five teachers in his house, and who received for them but eight hundred livres, found their support beyond his means; rather than jeopardize the work, M. De La Salle promised to supply the necessary surplus from his own income.

On the other hand, he soon perceived that Nyel was not able to conduct a community. With very precious qualities, there were deficiencies. Though he was generous, devoted, enterprising, supernatural in his views, and also a good teacher, yet he was inconstant, always preoccupied with new foundations, more stirring than thoughtful; his frequent journeys kept him too far away from his fellow workers. These young teachers, whom no previous training had prepared to suffice for themselves, suffered the bad consequences of isolation and

the want of supervision. They neglected their duties; hence, there was less progress among their pupils; the good behaviour which was so much appreciated in the beginning, soon began to disappear. If a prompt remedy had not been applied, the charity schools would have been seriously compromised.

M. De La Salle was too zealous not to ward off the danger. Besides, although unconsciously, he already loved this work which was his with the tenderness of a father. He therefore went to see the teachers, treated them with kindness, and drew up a rule of life for them. A certain hour was appointed for rising, for meals, and for beginning school. Until now, these inexperienced teachers had directed their classes without method, or concurrence, and each had followed his own caprice; he gave them suitable advice to bring about uniformity of management, an essential condition of success.

He thought of confining himself to what he had just done: "I had imagined", he said, "that the management of the schools and teachers that I was assuming would concern only the exterior, which would bind me in their regard to nothing more than to provide for their subsistence and to be careful that they should discharge their duties with piety and application." But good has its allurements like evil; M. De La Salle found himself on an incline on which he could not halt.

He could plainly see that the parish priest of Saint-Maurice regretted having encumbered his house by giving an asylum to the teachers. On the other hand, though he had no desire to exercise on these young men the authority of a superior, his charity made it a duty to visit them frequently and encourage them. He thought the difficulties would be easily smoothed over, if the

teachers had a residence in which they could be alone, but quite near his house, where he could see them often to advise and encourage them.

Since 1664, his family occupied a mansion situated on rue Sainte-Marguerite, in the parish of Saint-Symphorien. Not far from there, near the ramparts, he rented a secluded house for eighteen months, and the little company of teachers was transferred to it at Christmas 1679.

Thenceforward, the zealous Canon watched over them with the most assiduous devotedness. He drew up for them a more precise rule; being alone in their house, they could carry out the least prescriptions. He spoke to them frequently, giving them precious advice on matters of piety and the duties of their state.

Nyel, who felt the responsibility of watching over the teachers, could not but applaud the efforts of M. De La Salle to train his fellow labourers. Following the bent of his character, he hurried to look for new teachers to open a third school in the parish of Saint-Symphorien. And in fact, he succeeded, and thanks to the action of John Baptist, these new classes soon became more numerous and disciplined than the others.

Thus, with the blessing of God, grew the mustard seed so timidly sown in the soil of Rheims; in less than a year, it had grown large enough to be full of promise. But, in order to develop, it still stood in need of the gardener who presided at its germination; and Providence preserved from ruin the work of the Christian education of the poor by saving its pious founder from a great peril.

It was in 1680. Being overtaken by night in the midst of a tract covered with snow, John Baptist lost

his way and fell into a deep ravine. After long and painful efforts to get out of the precipice, he succeeded only by a kind of miracle. The infirmity, contracted on this occasion, reminded him until his death, of the danger he had run; and he never spoke of this event but with sentiments of lively gratitude for the manifest protection of God which he experienced on this occasion.

JOHN BAPTIST BY IMPERCEPTIBLE DEGREES BRINGS
THE TEACHERS INTO HIS HOUSE. — HE ESTABLISHES
SCHOOLS AT RETHEL, GUISE, CHATEAU-PORCIEN
AND LAON
1680-1682

The first few days passed in the new house were marked by sincere fervour; the little community took possession of it with great joy. But this outburst was of short duration. Was this surprising? What constancy could be expected from young men without training, under the direction of a master as inconstant as Nyel, attached to a thankless and hard task, and obliged to live in the same regularity as religious? A distaste for their vocation slowly penetrated their souls; having grown negligent in their work, they soon became dissatisfied with themselves and their position; they would have abandoned their schools, if M. De La Salle had not been there to sustain them.

This relaxation of will threw the zealous Canon into great perplexity. He asked himself whether he had not rushed into an impossible undertaking. He had to choose between the alternative of abandoning the

teachers or resolutely taking their direction on himself; for his spirit of regularity could not suffer the disorder which reigned among them; he would have preferred breaking with them altogether to keeping useless relations. Indeed, he could not conceive how a work of Christian education could be successfully carried on by men who were not profoundly pious and virtuous. But, how could he break the bonds which already united him to these humble teachers? He then felt how much his heart had attached itself to them in doing them good; yes, he loved them, and he was not to separate himself from them; he loved this work so providentially begun, and he was not to betray it. In a generous impulse, he took the resolution of making a new effort to establish order and fervour in the community of teachers.

But what means was he to take? He saw but one that was really efficacious, that of receiving the teachers into his house and living with them. This perspective frightened him. What would people, and especially his family say, if he received into his house and admitted to his table men whose social position was so inferior to his? Could he overcome his own repugnance, and lead a common life with these poor young men who lacked those exquisite manners in which he himself had been brought up? The souls of saints are not exempt from these interior struggles between nature and grace; indeed, holiness is not exempt from these combats, since it is measured by the victories gained with the help of grace over nature.

Distrusting his own light at so grave a juncture, he sought counsel, and it was to Father Barré that he addressed himself. The holy Minim was then in Paris,

where his zeal for popular education made him found a second Congregation of religious women, and gather into a community, under the name of *Brothers of the Child Jesus*, a certain number of teachers of charity schools of Paris. This man of God, in the full sense of the word, who was very experienced in the spiritual life, discovered the saint in the young Canon who consulted him, and said to him very emphatically: "If you wish to train your teachers to piety and make them love their state because of the good they can do in it, you should take them to your house and live in society with them."

These words were for M. De La Salle an order from heaven. But, being prudent and thoughtful, he did not act with precipitation. He entered gradually into the way of sacrifice; having once begun, nothing was to arrest his course; with a firm and uniform step, he arrived, like his Master, even at the summit of Calvary.

In order to prepare for the transition, he began by having the teachers take their meals in his house. This did not seem extraordinary; since it was he who was providing for them, it seemed quite natural that they should come to him for their meals. This daily presence at his table furnished him with the occasion of acting efficaciously on their souls. Silence was kept in the dining room, and well chosen books were read. The reading kept the teachers recollected, instructed them in their religious and professional duties, and became the subject of edifying conversation during their recreation. After refreshing their souls in this pious manner, they returned to their occupation with new ardour. What they gained in fervour was reflected



on their schools, and their classes became more flourishing.

During the Easter holidays of 1681, M. De La Salle availed himself of a long absence of Nyel and of the interruption of schoolwork to engage the teachers in a spiritual retreat of eight days. He brought them to his house at seven in the morning and kept them until evening prayer.

This retreat was very fruitful. Being kept during all this time in an atmosphere of piety, the teachers learned how to appreciate meditation and the practice of mortification of the senses. Admonished by their wise director, they took notice of their defects and learned the means of reforming their exterior at the same time that they developed their interior. After these eight days of a life sanctified by prayer and regulated by obedience, they seemed to be entirely new men, so much so, that Nyel himself, ravished with admiration, besought M. De La Salle to keep the teachers in his house.

This was a new and decisive resolution to be taken; John Baptist took it courageously, and, on June 24th 1681, he received the teachers into his own mansion.

Immediately criticism gave itself full vent, and contradictions began. Already the world had taxed him with singularity, and for the two years that he had taken charge of the teachers, his conduct had appeared strange. But silence had been kept through respect for his title of Canon and the high rank of his family. When the teachers had definitively taken up their abode with him, he was no longer spared. It was asked how a member of the Chapter, a man of rank, could consent to live with such common people; this was considered

beneath his dignity. The dress of the teachers consisting of a black gown with a rabat, without cloak, announced only poverty; not even the religious characteristic was perceived in it which, in the simple dress of a monk, is calculated to inspire respect.

These criticisms of the public exasperated his family and turned his relatives against him. His way of living caused them profound humiliation. In their estimation, John Baptist did not know how to respect his rank. They made it a crime for him especially that he kept his younger brothers at the same table as the teachers. Every time they met in his house, they overwhelmed him with bitter reproaches, accusing him of neglecting the care of his brothers for the purpose of bringing up teachers without manners, who knew but their *a b c*. According to one of his aunts, he listened to all this patiently, with his arms crossed, without saying a word.

His inflexible firmness so irritated his relatives, that they took away from his guardianship his two youngest brothers who were still living with him. This was useless violence, which, far from making him give up his work, resulted in making him more steadfast in it; for, his stock of affection and devotedness were now bestowed, without ever being again divided, on these humble teachers, who became his adopted family. This trial moreover helped him to overcome himself. If his refined feelings had suffered a little from his daily intercourse with strong characters whom education had not yet refined, he finished by overcoming his own repugnance and taking pleasure in the humble company that he had so religiously accepted.

God did not withhold his consolation for so much

humiliation and anguish of heart. His community became more fervent and regular than ever; very sensible progress was made in the schools; teachers were asked of him from all directions. During the single year 1682, notwithstanding his desire of not employing any young recruits without training them, M. De La Salle was obliged to give teachers to the charity schools of Rethel, Guise, Chateau-Porcien and Laon.

The letter which he wrote on June 20th to the mayor and aldermen of Chateau-Porcien, shows the zeal and delicacy with which he went about the foundation of the schools.

“ Were I to take but little interest in the glory of God ”, said he, “ I should be very hard-hearted not to be touched by the earnest entreaties of your Dean, and by the courteous manner in which you have addressed me. I should be very wrong, gentlemen, not to send you teachers from our community, seeing your eagerness and ardour to provide Christian instruction and education for your children. Rest assured then, that I have nothing more at heart than to second your good intentions in this matter and that, next Saturday, I shall send you two teachers to begin the school on the day after the feast of St. Peter. I hope you will be pleased with them. I am very much obliged for all your kindness, and I beg of you to believe me,

“ Respectfully yours, ” etc.

CHAPTER III.

THE COMMENCEMENT
OF THE INSTITUTE

1682-1688

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE QUITS HIS SPLENDID HOME. —
HIS COMMUNITY IS RENEWED. —
HE BECOMES CONFESSOR OF THE MASTERS

1682

When God chose Abraham to make of him the father of a great people, He said to him : “ Go forth out of thy country and out of thy father’s house, and come into the land which I shall show thee. ” After the most illustrious founders of Religious Orders, John Baptist De La Salle, in his turn, heard this command : he had already separated himself from his family ; he was now about to quit his own home, and soon after leave his country.

While his relatives sought to annoy him by withdrawing his younger brothers from his guardianship, they, on the contrary, left him greater freedom of

action. There was now nothing that could attach him any longer to his rich mansion of the rue Sainte-Marguerite, in no way built to be adapted to the needs of a community of poor teachers. With the design of avoiding the importunities of his relatives, and to withdraw the masters from the distractions of a house that was much frequented and of a very populous district, he rented a more secluded residence situated in rue Neuve, opposite the convent of Sainte-Claire, and took possession of it on June 24th 1682. From this place the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was to come forth.

He had scarcely entered his new home, when he began to establish order among the young masters. From the early hour of rising until evening, not a moment was left to caprice; the community went from prayer to the schools, and from the schools to prayer. Even the meal times and the recreations were not complete relaxations; the reading at table fixed the mind on serious thoughts or some edifying subject; the conversation during the recreation was a commentary on what had been read.

This monastic regularity could not fail to bring on a crisis. These young men, who had sought to be teachers rather than religious, "found their life now tedious, their exercises too restraining, their food too simple, their liberty too straitened." Overcome by weariness, and feeling their will gave way under the yoke, most of them withdrew. This desertion was a cruel trial for the tender heart of M. De La Salle.

But he soon saw that God himself was watching over his little flock. At the moment when the community was about to begin, it was necessary that a choice

should be made, in order to exclude the intractable, whose presence would have been dangerous. Besides, the empty places were very soon filled; for God raised up numerous promising vocations, in which talent for the school duties combined with the most consoling dispositions of piety. With the exception of two or three seniors, his community was now composed of entirely new members, all ready to be guided by him and fashioned to the religious life. From this moment, the house assumed all the appearance of the most irreproachable regularity.

This crisis gave M. De La Salle to understand the necessity of a uniform interior direction for all the members of the community. This is why he now complied with the desire that the masters had many times expressed, that they might be able to address themselves to him for confession; in this way he became completely their father and his direction took hold of their entire being.

However, in order to allow them the greatest liberty of conscience, he frequently procured extraordinary confessors for them. He begged these confessors to tell him frankly whether the subjects experienced any constraint, so willing was he to cease to be their confessor, if this office was found incompatible with that of superior; but not one of them ever advised him to abandon this practice, and he remained faithful to it till his death.

From the moment that he had taken the interior direction of his disciples, a notable progress manifested itself in the community. All, taking the spirit of their father, had the same maxims, the same views, the same sentiments; all of them seemed to have but one heart

and one soul. This unity of mind caused charity to reign. Mutual charity rendered their souls happy, and from this time, regularity was only a "sweet yoke and a light burden."

M. De La Salle had, besides, the secret of rendering his authority gentle, and of tempering the force of his direction with kindness. He disliked to command; thanks to the impulse which he imparted to them, they desired to do good on their own accord, and had the consciousness of doing it by spontaneous acts.

His example much more than his precepts drew them into the path of virtue. Not satisfied with the hours he consecrated to prayer with his community, he retired very often into a solitary garden that he had hired near the ramparts. There he gave his soul up to prayer and his body to rude penance. He macerated his flesh with bloody disciplines, so that the place where he had prayed was marked with his blood. "Ah!" cries his biographer, "if the walls of the little hut that served him as a cell could speak, what would they not relate... of the pious excesses to which he delivered himself through the spiritual intoxication caused by the new wine he was beginning to taste!"

In these intimate communings with God and by these exercises of mortification, he prepared himself for new sacrifices.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE RESIGNS HIS CANONRY

1683

The fervour of the masters was very soon subjected to a dreadful temptation, that of distrust. Not that the

austere life which they led frightened them; but the thought of their future fate troubled them. As long as M. De La Salle would support them and they would have strength to bear the burden of their labour, all would assuredly go well. But if their virtuous chief should fail them, what would become of them? Deprived of resources and having no profession, they would be infallibly reduced to beggary. And even should M. De La Salle remain faithful, they would still find themselves doomed to a miserable old age; and in case of illness, there would be no other asylum for them than the hospital.

M. De La Salle, made aware of their fears, tried to preach to them abandonment to Providence, firmly believing that, to encourage the poor sorely tempted souls, it would be enough to reanimate their faith: "Men of little faith", said he to them, "by your want of confidence, you set limits to a bounty that knows none. Certainly, if it is infinite, universal and continual, of which you have not the least doubt, it will always care for you and will never fail you."

But these words, as well as many others, found their hearts closed. The masters were rendered insensible to these exhortations by a secret thought. They were unable to hide it long: "It is easy for you", said they to M. De La Salle, "to speak to us in such terms. You want for nothing; you are well provided for; you have riches and you have, besides, your canonicate; all this will protect you from the destitution into which we shall infallibly fall, should the schools fail."

These reflections, though somewhat rudely expressed, were a revelation to M. De La Salle. Far from addressing the masters reproachfully, he humbly confessed that

they were right. He understood that he would have no ascendancy over his disciples until he had despoiled himself of all his riches and had become poor like them. From this moment, he, in the secrecy of his heart, sacrificed all his wealth. But what was he to do with it?

Then followed many an hour of terrible anguish and of painful hesitation. He hoped indeed to have the courage to become poor like his disciples, and to sacrifice his patrimony and his prebend. But did not prudence dictate to him to employ his patrimony in founding new schools, and to live with the masters on the income from his canonry?

Before taking any definite action in so grave a matter, he consulted Father Barré again. Some years before this, the saintly Minim himself had sought the advice of wise persons as to the means that would assure the subsistence of his religious teachers, and had received from M. Boudon, the pious Archdeacon of Evreux, the following answer: "Found your establishments on Providence; that is of more value than all contracts."

Being still full of these thoughts, he answered Canon De La Salle: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. The foxes are the children of the world, who are attached to its goods. The birds of the air are the religious, who have their cell as their refuge. But those who, like you, are destined to instruct and catechise the poor, should have no other portion on earth than that of the Son of man. So you should divest yourself not only of all your riches, but also resign your benefice, and live in an entire abandonment of all that might withdraw your attention from procuring God's glory."

M. De La Salle, though prepared for all, yet felt some surprise at so explicit a decision. Being as prudent as he was courageous, he took time to meditate before his crucifix, and there to ponder over the words of the pious Minim. But the more he prayed, the more the fascination of entire sacrifice seized him.

As soon as his resolution of sacrificing all things was ripe, he apprised his director and solicited his approbation. M. Callou, superior of the seminary, was a man of God; but he did not share Father Barré's ideas; he would have wished that the income from the patrimony and canonry should be consecrated to the charity schools. John Baptist, impatient to commence his sacrifice, proposed to divest himself at least of his prebend, which required too constant attendance to be compatible with the care of the schools and the duties of the community.

As the affair lingered on, his intention became known outside. A sudden and violent tempest burst out against him. He was severely treated by public opinion; according to some, "his excessive mental strain had weakened his mind;" while others said "that, in acting thus, he was but following the bent of his mind, which always went to extremes;" it was hoped "that he would not find directors complaisant enough to approve of such a whim." His relatives and friends, in fear and alarm, conjured him to weigh all the consequences of his project: his resignation would dishonour his family; the members of the Chapter would regard it as an act of disdain; and he was exposing himself to poverty and neglect.

All these attacks found him impassible and resolute. "The last shift", said he, "will be to ask alms, and

should this be necessary, we will do it." This firm attitude gained his director's assent.

But there was yet the Archbishop's authorization to be obtained. John Baptist undertook a journey to Paris to solicit it. M. Le Tellier, who was prejudiced against him, was displeased with his design and even refused him the audience he solicited.

This journey to Paris was not however without consolation for him. For, in fact, he was encouraged by Fathers Giry and Barré, and besides received the full approbation of his old masters of Saint-Sulpice. One of them, M. De La Barmondière, who had become parish priest, made him promise soon to return, and bring with him two of his masters, to take charge of the charity school in the rue Princesse. Our Saint, believing that his promise was all but accomplished, "left", as his biographer says, as a proof of the sincerity of his word, "a part of his wearing apparel."

With his heart full of these hopes, M. De La Salle followed his Archbishop to Rheims. Renewed entreaties only provoked new refusals. One day, when he had been again refused, he retired to the cathedral to pray. He poured out his heart with an ardent supplication at the foot of the altar; he was noticed, motionless and as if in ecstasy, by two persons who knew him. "Pray for M. De La Salle", said one of them, "he is losing his mind." "You are right", replied the other, "he is surely losing what is worldly in it in order to fill it with God's spirit." Strengthened by prayer, our Saint returned to the Archbishop. To his great surprise, the doors of the archiepiscopal palace opened before him. The prelate received him kindly, spoke to him with benevolence, accepted his resignation and signed the act by

which he made over his prebend to M. Faubert. At last, his soul delivered, abounding with joy, John Baptist returned to the rue Neuve, assembled his disciples and sang with them the *Te Deum*.

However, the matter was not yet at an end, and a fresh storm burst upon him, as soon as it became known that he had transmitted his prebend to M. Faubert, then a pious and deserving priest, but of humble extraction. The De La Salle family protested, and pretended that the canonry of John Baptist should descend to his brother Louis. The Chapter was indignant that, without consulting it, a man of rather humble extraction had been introduced into its ranks. The public criticised the incomprehensible disinterestedness that had influenced the Saint to prefer a poor ecclesiastic to his own brother. Maurice Le Tellier, who shared the feelings of the family and of the Chapter, charged M. Callou to persuade M. De La Salle to reconsider his decision.

M. Callou did, in fact, take steps in order to please the Archbishop, the Chapter, the family and the city. But John Baptist answered with all simplicity : “ If my brother were not my brother, I should not hesitate to satisfy the Archbishop, in making choice of, and in giving him the preference to the one whom I have named ; but can I, and ought I listen to the voice of nature and to the solicitations that prompt it ? ” Profoundly touched by such religious sentiments, M. Callou did not insist : “ God forbid ”, said he to him, “ that I should advise you to do what every one seems to ask. Do what the Spirit of God has inspired you to do. His counsel, though contrary to the one I brought, is the only one that must be listened to. ”

Thus ended this long and painful affair, in which

John Baptist was seen to display as much will and energy to despoil himself of the riches and honours of the world, as other men generally employ for their acquirement.

As soon as he saw his bonds broken, he determined to start for Paris : several friends urged him to do so, M. De La Barmondière and Father Barré called him there ; and, besides, he was in honour bound to go by the formal promise he had already made. But his director, who considered his departure inopportune, and even harmful to the rising work, made it an obligation for him to remain at Rheims some time longer. His work, in fact, required to be fortified before being carried to a distance.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE SELLS HIS PATRIMONY
AND DISTRIBUTES THE PROCEEDS TO THE POOR

1683 - 1684

Delivered from his canonicate, John Baptist was still tied to the goods of the world by his rich patrimony. He heard the words of the Gospel resounding in the utmost recesses of his heart : “ If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor ; and come, follow me. ” From this moment, the supreme ambition of his life was to become poor like his disciples, and to have no other guarantee for the future than God.

He acquainted his director with the interior movement which urged him to sacrifice his fortune. “ I will not renounce it, if you do not wish me to do so ; I will abandon

it only inasmuch as you advise; if you tell me to keep anything, were it but five *sols*, I will keep them."

M. Callou was liable to be greatly perplexed by this proposal. For such total renouncement, frequent enough in the early ages of the Church, had become very rare, and it could not fail to lower M. De La Salle in the estimation of all prudent men. However, rising superior to all human prudence under the influence of divine inspiration, M. Callou unhesitatingly gave his full consent to the proposal of his illustrious penitent. "But," said he to him, "since you are determined to make an entire renunciation of your patrimony, make it in favour of your community, and found your schools."

But the Saint was haunted by the words of Father Barré said in jest: "If you endow your schools, they will dwindle away¹." Thus divided between two apparently contradictory counsels, he had recourse to prayer: "My God", cried he, "I know not whether I should endow the schools or not: it is not for me to establish communities, or to know how they should be established. It is for Thee to know how, and to do it in the way Thou pleasest. I dare not found establishments, because I know not Thy will. I will therefore contribute nothing to found our houses. If Thou found them, they will be founded; if Thou do not found them, they will remain without foundation. I beseech Thee to make Thy holy will known to me."

A prayer so humble merited an answer. God gave the reply through the voice of events. The winter of 1684 and all the following year caused such frightful

¹ In French: *Si vous fondez les écoles, elles fondront*. The play is on the verbs *fonder* and *fondre*, which entirely resemble each other in some parts of their conjugation.

destitution throughout the province of Champagne, that M. De La Salle firmly believed that God ordered him to sell his goods and give the proceeds to the poor. And he did it, in fact, largely but prudently. He gave all, but with as much order and discernment as if he had been only the administrator of riches intrusted to his care.

The poor whom he assisted were divided into three categories.

The school children, after each meeting, had a portion of bread given to them, and, according to the remark of a biographer, "they came to receive it with much more avidity than the instruction."

The bashful poor were the special objects of his care; he watched their movements that he might find out the destitution that their reserve would hide from view, and he had important assistance brought to them with so much discretion that their self-love was not wounded.

As to the poor who were known as such, he gathered them into his own house: after a catechetical instruction, which he himself gave, or sometimes one of the ecclesiastics that lived with him, he distributed abundant alms to them. This distribution took place every morning. Adoring with the spirit of faith Jesus Christ Himself in all these poor, he often went on his knees to give them this bread; and sometimes, glad to make himself poor like them, he would take a portion of bread and eat it in their presence. At that time of famine, after all had been given, he humbled himself so far as to beg from door to door, without fear of being rebuffed.

The most considerable fortune in the hands of so compassionate a man, would have been quickly disposed of. And so M. De La Salle soon found himself

reduced to the ranks of the poorest of the poor. It was the state in which God wished him to be that He might take him and cause him to accomplish His designs.

But a man without either wealth or position, no matter what name he bears, is doomed to all kinds of scorn by the world. M. De La Salle was now beginning to feel the contempt and persecution which follow in the train of poverty. What mattered it to him thenceforward, so long as humiliation glorifies God and renders the works prosperous!

THE FIRST ASSEMBLY. — THE FIRST VOWS.
— THE RELIGIOUS HABIT

1684

God did, in fact, bless the work of John Baptist with prosperity. His new home became the hearth of a very active apostolate. Several priests, drawn by the fame of his virtues, came to ask his advice and to make a spiritual retreat under his direction; some of them even lived with him and shared his work. Of these, one of the most zealous was M. Faubert, his successor in the Chapter, who had grouped and formed to piety some young ecclesiastical students.

But nothing touched the Saint's heart so much as the number of well chosen vocations that God raised up at that time for his schools. Whilst the first masters, recruited by Adrian Nyel, had not been always guided by supernatural views, the new comers, on the other hand, looked upon their employment only as the means of procuring the glory of God by instructing the poor.

Some came from the working classes; while others had given up their literary or theological studies to devote themselves with him to the education of children.

Struck by their good dispositions, M. De La Salle thought the moment was come to group the masters together and organize a Community. This is why, after he himself had made a retreat at the Carmelite convent of Rheims, he convoked the Directors of the schools of Rethel, Guise and Laon, to whom he added the principal masters of Rheims, so as to constitute an apostolic college of twelve disciples. This was the first Assembly of the Institute.

It was opened on May 9th 1684, the vigil of the Ascension, and was continued, under the form of a retreat, until Trinity Sunday.

These seventeen days were divided between prayer and conferences; for, by grouping his disciples in the presence of God, M. De La Salle proposed to himself to decide the most important questions regarding the rising Society by common consent. For this end, he gave the masters the greatest liberty to express their views during the conferences. Fearing that his words should have too great an influence over them, and so prevent the spontaneity of their sentiments, the humble superior was the last to speak. He then collected the votes, and decided according to the majority.

The first subjects that were considered were the Rules and Constitutions; but it was judged premature to fix them by writing. It was thought much better to test by experience, for some years yet, the customs and regulations given by the founder. Did not St. Vincent De Paul wait until the close of his long career before writing the Constitutions of his Congregation?

It was easier to settle the service of the table, which was made uniform for all the houses. Wisely conceived, it safeguarded both the laws of health and the obligations of penance. For men overwhelmed with work, sufficient food was necessary; this was accorded them. But to men who wished to live poor and mortified, choice dishes were not suitable; therefore delicate meats and high-priced fish were forbidden.

As to the religious habit, it was agreed that it was necessary to adopt one that would distinguish the masters of the community from seculars; but it was left to the Servant of God to determine on the form and colour. Until then, the masters had worn the short habit, adding thereto only a rabat; the following winter, Providence itself gave indications that were faithfully followed.

Finally, there came the question of the vows, the most important of all. The fervour displayed by the young disciples of M. De La Salle on this occasion was admirable. With a generous impulse of faith, they asked to bind themselves by the three vows of religion, not for a certain, determined time, but for life: it seemed that the obligations of poverty, chastity and obedience did not cost them any sacrifice. But if John Baptist was happy on account of the holy ambition with which God filled the hearts of his children, he was too prudent to be carried away by this movement of youthful ardour. He convinced these dear souls that it would be premature to take upon themselves such serious and grave engagements, and thus persuaded them to consent to take but the vow of obedience, and that for only one year.

On the morning of Trinity Sunday, the first vows of

the Brothers of the Christian Schools were pronounced in the humble oratory of the rue Neuve. M. De La Salle had prepared the formula and had signed it; each of the masters made a copy of it, and signed it in the same manner. The holy founder celebrated Mass and gave Holy Communion to his twelve disciples; then, with lighted taper in hand, he pronounced the vow of obedience. The masters followed him to the foot of the altar, and there took the same engagement.

Before separating, the first twelve religious agreed to meet the next year. On the appointed day, only eight presented themselves and renewed their vow. The defection of the four others confirmed the Saint in the prudent slowness he exercised towards his disciples.

The question of the costume which had been left undecided was solved the following winter. Four times a day, in the snow and in the rain, the masters had to pass through the streets of the city to go to their schools. Poorly protected by the insufficiency of their clothing, they inspired the inhabitants with pity. The Mayor of Rheims made the remark to M. De La Salle, and advised him to provide them with a mantle to keep them warmer. The mantle was the one with pendent sleeves, and much worn by the peasants of Champagne. As it was the dress used by the poor, M. De La Salle adopted it. To this he added a soutane, made of coarse black cloth, closed in front with iron hooks and eyes, such as was worn by ecclesiastics at the end of the xviiith century. In order to complete the costume, and in the same spirit of simplicity and poverty, he added the white rabat, the three-cornered hat with wide brim, and, finally, shoes with thick soles, such as were then worn by the labouring classes.

This costume appeared very strange at first, and drew upon the religious that wore it many bitter scoffs. But those young men were not discouraged either by insults or by humiliations, for they rejoiced in suffering for the name of Jesus Christ. Since that time, the Brothers' habit has been honoured by so many individual and social virtues, that it is everywhere respectfully saluted by the rich and the poor.

The change of dress led to the change of name. The title of master appeared very pretentious; in order not to offend the simple people who would come to the schools, the name *Brothers of the Christian Schools* was adopted.

But humility urged them on still further. They resolved to renounce their family name and assume a new one, both to hide their origin from wordlings, and to show that their entrance into the Institute, being as a new birth, imposed on them a complete transformation of life.

THE CREATIONS OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE :

NOVITIATE, JUNIOR NOVITIATE,

SEMINARY FOR COUNTRY SCHOOLMASTERS

1684-1685

The Assembly of 1684 was the signal for immense progress. For the founder, encouraged by the sympathy and fervour of his dear disciples, began to organize the Institute.

His first care was to establish a novitiate. From the very commencement, he felt the need of it; and he

saw how detrimental it was to the young masters to be sent into the schools, without having had either a religious formation or a pedagogical training. But he was obliged to yield to the imperious wants of the moment. From the year 1684, the new comers were kept for a longer time under his care, combining for them, in a prudent measure, both the exercises of the religious life and the elements of the intellectual life, and he employed them in the schools only after a serious preparation.

Among the subjects grace brought him, there were many who were too young to be sent to the same community as the Brothers and novices. He received them all the same with pleasure; and it was for them that he created, in a completely isolated part of the house, the junior novitiate, which he placed under the direction of one of the most pious of the senior Brothers. This portion of his religious family was always very dear to him, and he had no sweeter consolation than to visit these youths. On Christmas day especially, he would come among them, and, grouping them in their little oratory, pronounce an act of consecration that these junior novices repeated after him.

Notwithstanding the increasing number of vocations, the Saint was not able to comply with the numerous appeals that were addressed to him. They multiplied, in fact; because country parish priests, hearing of the blessings that God showered upon the schools of Rheims, besought M. De La Salle to give them masters formed by him for the good management of the schools. But M. De La Salle did not accede to their desires, not because he had no subjects, but because he was resolved never to send fewer than two Brothers to any

school : a resolution from which he never departed.

The parish priests then hit upon an ingenious solution of the difficulty. Each of them chose, in his parish, the young man whom he judged the most capable of teaching, and confided him to M. De La Salle's direction. In this way was formed a kind of seminary, or normal school, into which young laymen were gratuitously admitted and instructed in all that a good teacher should know. Destined to be the priests' auxiliaries and to sing in the choir, they learned the plain-chant, and, at the same time, they applied themselves to learn reading, writing and arithmetic. More than thirty students at a time attended this seminary for country schoolmasters. The Saint was aided by Providence in this beneficent enterprise, for it raised up for him devoted benefactors whom he could not well dispense with.

The success of this normal school gave the Duke De Mazarin the idea of founding one at Rethel, from which he would take Christian teachers to instruct the children of his tenants. This project gained for the Saint one of those humiliations of which he loved to relish the bitterness, because, the work being novel and singular, the Archbishop did not approve of it at first ; and when the Duke De Mazarin and M. De La Salle presented themselves to obtain his authorization to establish it, Maurice Le Tellier simply said : " You are two fools. " " No, Monseigneur ", replied the humble priest, " there is only one. " The Duke De Mazarin, having failed to obtain permission at Rheims, founded the school on another of his domains, situated in the diocese of Laon.

John Baptist was now engaged more and more in the founding of popular schools, and henceforth the work

depended on him alone. At this juncture, God deprived him of those who had been his advisers and helpers in the early days of his work. Father Barré died May 31st 1686; John Baptist, who had imbibed his spirit and had taken the most decisive steps under his direction, mourned for him as for a father. And when he learned of the death of Adrian Nyel, who had retired to Rouen in 1685, he assembled the Brothers of Rheims and with them celebrated a solemn service for the repose of the soul of this first Brother of the Christian Schools.

THE FERVOUR OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
AND OF HIS FIRST BROTHERS

1685 - 1688

The three years that preceded his departure for Paris were for John Baptist a period of interior activity and of hidden fruitfulness. He made no new foundations; but, like the seeds that ferment under the soil, he silently prepared the future expansion with his disciples.

He devoted so much time to meditation, that one would have said that prayer was his sole occupation. He had chosen the most isolated room in the house, in order to be less disturbed in his communings with God. As much as proprieties permitted, he shunned the distracting society of men. Not content with the hours which he devoted to prayer in his room, he passed an entire night each week in the church of Saint-Remy. He made the exercises of a spiritual retreat several times a year, and, for this purpose, he sought the monasteries in which he was least known.

This constant union with God made him master of his senses. His body, reduced to servitude by merciless mortifications, was no hindrance to the soul in its movement towards God. It cost him much, for example, to partake of the common fare at the table of the Brothers; but, by long fasting, he triumphed over this repugnance at last. Merely to refrain from flattering his senses was too low an ideal for him; he went so far as to treat his body to bloody scourgings and sharp-pointed iron chains. "He became the tyrant of a body that had been reared with extreme care", said one of his relatives, "for there never was a more delicately brought up child."

Humility, which is only another, but the highest and most meritorious form of mortification, appeared to be his by preference. He could not bear being praised, or having regard shown to him: the last place, the poorest share at table, the worst clothing were what he sought. To remove from the Brothers the occasion of speaking of him, he formulated this rule, that they should not speak of any living person in particular. On the contrary, humiliations and insult were his delight. Having to replace a sick Brother in the Saint-Jacques school, he gloried in wearing the mantle with pendent sleeves, and in thus exposing himself to public ridicule in his native city. The people crowded and insulted him several times, under his own window, in the rue Neuve, under the pretext that the Brothers had been too severe with some unruly children; he only thanked God for being thus paid for his devotedness.

To one animated with such sentiments, the first place was insupportable; and it was a source of grief for him, after the Assembly of 1684, not to be the last that he

might all the better practise obedience. However, two years later, he persuaded the assembled Brothers to elect as their superior one of themselves, saying that it was not advisable to have a priest as their superior, and that it was most important, to put a Brother at the head of a Congregation of Brothers without delay. With childlike deference, which is to their honour, they allowed themselves to be caught in the snare, and elected Brother L'Heureux as their Superior General. What inexpressible joy this gave the humble founder! He did nothing without asking permission; he would prostrate himself at the feet of the Superior, and accuse himself of the least imperfection that he believed he had discovered, and ask for a penance. No kind of work was too menial for him; and one day it was necessary for Brother L'Heureux to forbid him, in the name of obedience, to do certain work that was judged to be beneath the dignity of a priest.

When the Archbishop was made aware of what had taken place at the rue Neuve, he annulled the election of Brother L'Heureux and ordered the Saint to resume the office of Superior; this was regarded as a deliverance by Brother L'Heureux, but was a cause of profound regret for John Baptist. However, the Saint's humility was in no way disarmed; if it was thought unbecoming that a priest should be subject to a layman, he could prepare Brother L'Heureux for the priesthood, and he already looked forward to the time when he could divest himself of his office, and place the government upon him. And, in fact, without further delay, he set the Brother L'Heureux to study for the priesthood.

Such examples of virtue are always contagious.

The young men that lived in contact with M. De La Salle were seized with the noble desire of perfection. Interior life, facilitated by profound recollection, was active; sensuality was courageously withstood, and the love of humiliations was not less in honour than that of mortification; rigorous abstinence and corporal macerations were added to the daily work of the school.

In this enthusiasm of fervour, excesses were not always avoided. But who would reproach those choice souls for not having, in their generosity, kept themselves within just bounds? If some of them succumbed, who would dare affirm that God did not accept those innocent victims, those truly fresh-blown flowers in the morning of the Institute, as the first sacrifices and the first offerings of the great work of which He was blessing the commencement?

Among those young Brothers, three names remain in benediction in the Institute; they are Brothers Jean-François, Bourlette and Maurice. Brother Jean-François summarized their dispositions, when he cried out in an ecstasy of his last day on earth: "Ah! beautiful eternity, how lovely is thy abode! Love, love, love, we shall go to see love."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCHOOLS OF SAINT-SULPICE

1688-1691

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE TAKES POSSESSION OF THE CHARITY SCHOOLS OF SAINT-SULPICE

1688

M. De La Barmondière, parish priest of Saint-Sulpice, was waiting for M. De La Salle since 1683. Of the seven schools that M. Olier had opened forty years before for the poor of the parish, only one now existed, that of the rue Princesse. The others had been closed through lack of capable masters. At the rue Princesse there were about two hundred pupils on the registers, and to manage such a large and noisy school population, M. Compagnon, one of the priests of the parish, had for assistants a hosiery maker, called Rafrond, and a boy fourteen years of age; the former taught his industry. There was no regularity, no intellectual progress, no religious or moral benefit. It was to avert

the ruin of the school, that the zealous parish priest of Saint-Sulpice appealed to the masters of Rheims.

M. De La Salle was not less desirous of establishing himself in Paris. Personally, he was anxious to withdraw from Rheims, where so many family ties and friends impeded his action. That his Institute might not be considered a local and diocesan work, as well as to be delivered from all the fluctuations of successive administrations, it was necessary to transfer it to Paris, the capital of the kingdom, as it would there alone find the liberty and independence necessary for its full expansion. These ideas, controlled by prudent counsels, induced M. De La Salle to leave Rheims, and to reject the tempting advances by which the Archbishop tried to retain him.

Having confided the communities of Rheims to Brother L'Heureux, he took with him two of the most learned Brothers, and set out on foot for Paris, where he arrived on February 24th 1688.

M. De La Barmondière lodged M. De La Salle and his two Brothers in the schoolhouse of the rue Princesse. From the very beginning, the Brothers courageously set themselves to work. The disorder they witnessed would have disconcerted them, had not their father been there to encourage them. They divided the pupils into three classes, and at once, thanks to their method, made them attentive to their lessons. Leaving the general direction to M. Compagnon, the Brothers occupied themselves only with the teaching. M. De La Salle observed the greatest reserve: he noticed all and complained of nothing; he passed from section to section, and instructed the children in the principles of Christian life; he spoke to them with gentleness and inspired them

with docility, attention and proper behaviour by his affability. " His seasonable remonstrances ", says his biographer, " produced fruit in the hearts of those young children, and soon a very sensible change was remarked in their manners and general conduct. "

As soon as the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice was told of these happy results, he went to visit the classes. He found that the behaviour was better; the catechism more thoroughly known. He understood that, for the perfect discipline of the school, the Saint should have the entire authority and direction, and he conferred them on him, at the same time adding that if other Brothers should be required, he had only to send for them to Rheims.

M. De La Salle was no sooner invested with the complete control, than he began the work of reform. The school door was opened and closed at a fixed hour. It was opened in the morning for the admission of the pupils; as soon as the classes were begun, the door was closed, and those coming late were obliged to remain in the street. No pupil was allowed to leave before the end of school; by this means that continual movement to and fro, the fruitful source of perpetual disorder among the children, was suppressed. The pupils were conducted to Mass every morning; they walked through the streets silently and in an orderly manner, as if these formerly turbulent scholars had been transformed into novices of a fervent community. The catechism was taught every day, and that without prejudice to reading, writing, or arithmetic, to which, in fact, more time was now devoted.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE BECOMES A BUTT
TO OPPOSITION

1688

The success of the charity schools could not fail to excite fierce opposition to their founder. A new work, while making its way through human affairs, fatally clashes with either interests or with passions, and sometimes provokes terrible reactions. Notwithstanding John Baptist De La Salle's tact and the meekness from which he never swerved, he succeeded in making a beaten path for himself only by passing through unceasing opposition, and he assured the existence of his Institute by confronting, calmly but resolutely, a thousand tempests let loose against him. His life, as we shall see, was but one long history of moral sufferings.

His first difficulties sprang from jealousy. In fact, M. Compagnon, who had so ardently desired the Brothers, looked upon their success with no favour; he felt humiliated at their having succeeded where he had failed, and it seemed that he could not pardon M. De La Salle's being put at the head of the school by the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice. On his side, Rafrond, the hosiery maker, pretended that the new organization took away many hours from the industry. The two malcontents agreed that the Brothers should be dismissed. Rafrond made complaints to M. De La Barmondière and threatened to retire, if the new regulations were not withdrawn; but the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice refused to sacrifice the school for the hosiery industry, and was very careful not to dismiss M. De La Salle

to reinstate Rafrond. M. De La Salle called a Brother from Rheims who was familiar with hosiery work, and thus the industry was continued in this school of poor children.

M. Compagnon did not consider himself defeated. Profiting by the temporary absence of the Saint, he spread disadvantageous reports concerning him, and cleverly availed himself of a meeting of ladies to represent as disastrous the methods introduced by M. De La Salle. The calumnies soon spread among the parishioners and the priests, so much so, that the ears of M. De La Barmondière were soon filled with nothing but complaints against the new masters. Whether they succeeded in inspiring him with distrust of M. De La Salle, or whether he simply felt the impression of weariness, so common to superiors with respect to people who make trouble for them, we know not. However that may be, he resolved to dismiss M. De La Salle and his Brothers, and to put the school on the same footing as it was before their arrival.

During all this time, M. De La Salle, who was not ignorant of the conspiracy formed against him, was silently doing his duty, and when M. Baudrand, his director, came to tell him that it would be well to take advantage of the vacation to retire, the persecuted, innocent one made no complaint, but prepared himself in silence for his departure. However, when he presented himself before M. De La Barmondière to take leave, the good parish priest was greatly troubled. In fact, the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice esteemed M. De La Salle; he recognized in him the eminent teacher; was he going to sacrifice him, without making inquiries, to accusations that were perhaps nothing more than odious,

idle tales? Regaining possession of himself, he begged M. De La Salle to remain at least till he had reflected more maturely.

And M. De La Salle remained; his soul was quite undisturbed in the midst of so much uncertainty; but new intrigues raised up renewed agitation against him. The least imperfections of the school, artfully taken up, gave rise to malicious insinuations, and even to positive accusations. To put an end to such an embarrassing situation, the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice charged one of his curates, M. De Forbin-Janson, to make an inquiry to discover the hidden cause of all these vexatious occurrences.

An inquiry could only bring out in bolder relief the virtues and merits of the pious teachers of the rue Princesse. M. De Forbin-Janson visited the school and found a well managed house, with attentive children, and masters devoted to their duties; he questioned the Brothers, but could not get one word of complaint from them against their calumniators; he begged M. De La Salle to answer the charges, but the Saint replied that all he desired to know was his own faults, that he might correct them. The enquirer was too shrewd not to discover the true cause of this slanderous campaign. He rendered justice to the innocence of the accused, and regained for him the entire sympathy of the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice. M. De La Barmondière prepared to remove the cause of this division, when he resigned the office of parish priest, in January 1689.

DIFFICULTIES RELATIVE TO THE HABIT
OF THE BROTHERS

1689 - 1690

M. De La Barmondière's successor was M. Baudrand, who had been director of the seminary for many years. M. Baudrand had known M. De La Salle during his studies; he was even his spiritual director since his return to Paris, and had sustained him like a father in his first difficulties with M. De La Barmondière. M. Baudrand's appointment to the parish was therefore a happy event for the Brothers.

He, in fact, at first, seemed to be in full sympathy with them. He dismissed from their house M. Compagnon, whose presence was so awkward for them; he visited them in their classes, and at the sight of those silent children, so well behaved, so obedient and already so well instructed in their religion, he was not able to suppress his joy. In the month of January of the following year, he opened a second school at the extremity of the rue du Bac, near the Pont-Royal, and M. De La Salle called new Brothers to direct it.

But it seemed that severe trials were to be the necessary price of the prosperity of M. De La Salle's schools; therefore after a year of quiet, successful work, the cross recommenced to weigh heavily on his shoulders.

M. Baudrand undertook to change the Brothers' dress. This costume appeared as strange in Paris as at Rheims. Men of the world criticised it; the parishioners of Saint-Sulpice must have made observations to M. Baudrand.

For the daily going and coming from the rue Princesse to the rue du Bac had doubtless revealed the existence and presence of the Brothers to the influential persons of the neighbourhood, on whom the singularity of dress had produced a disagreeable impression. The parish priest of Saint-Sulpice desired that the Brothers should wear the ecclesiastical habit, a long cassock and mantle, instead of the short robe and the mantle with pendent sleeves.

He thought he had the right to impose this change; for he regarded the Brothers, not as a Congregation fully constituted under a superior, but a simple association of pious and devoted men, who laboured in the works of the parish, and depended on him alone. And as M. De La Salle was his penitent, he flattered himself that he would regard it as a duty to accede to his desires.

However great was M. De La Salle's deference for M. Baudrand, he was alarmed at this proposal; he saw at once all the disadvantages that would result from such a change. There would be no longer any stability possible in the rules, if he were to permit so serious an attack on the Institute. Acting under the advice of prudent men, especially MM. Tronson and Bäuhin, he opposed an energetic but respectful refusal to the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice.

He even drew up a *Memorial*, in which he demonstrated, with a force of logic betokening consummate good sense, that it had been well to give the Brothers a habit which would distinguish them from ecclesiastics, and that such an important modification would entail disastrous consequences from the point of view of regularity.

M. Baudrand, who was rendered deaf to the question of principle by the complaints of his parishioners, did

not like the reasonings of the *Memorial*. He said that M. De La Salle's firmness was nothing less than obstinacy, and, though he had a very lively affection for him, he manifested his displeasure by great coldness. M. De La Salle, who had humbly put on the mantle to teach the class of a sick Brother, consented to resume the ecclesiastical habit himself, but the Brothers continued to wear the robe and mantle.

LAWSUIT INSTITUTED BY THE MASTERS
OF THE "PETITES ÉCOLES"

1690

The holy founder had no sooner come out of the difficulty about changing the dress, than he found himself in the embarrassments of a lawsuit that was brought on by the masters of the "*petites écoles*".

From the moment of the Brothers' arrival in Paris, the touchiness of these good men was aroused. Were not the new teachers, under the pretext of instructing the poor gratuitously, about to draw from them a part of their scholars? As long as there was only the school of the rue Princesse, the masters of the "*petites écoles*" contented themselves with watching the Brothers' work, but made no disturbance. But as soon as the school in the rue du Bac was opened and had become in a short time very flourishing, they took alarm and began to agitate. If they had not lost any paying pupils, they would not have said anything; but, having lost some, they considered that their interests were injured. In fact, with the poor children, who till then were left to

wander about the streets, a few did come from the pay-schools to the Brothers whose school was free to all; but as their mission was to teach the poor gratuitously, they did not consider themselves bound to examine family conditions and their degree of indigence.

Irritated by a competition that was going to diminish their income, the lay masters determined to stop the spread of these rival establishments. At first, they had recourse to violence, and had all the furniture of the free schools seized; then they summoned M. De La Salle and his Brothers before the precentor of Notre-Dame, as being guilty of infringing on their privileges. They, in fact, formed a powerful union, under the jurisdiction of the precentor of Notre-Dame; and the differences that sprang up among themselves, as well as the complaints they made against rivals, came, in the first instance, before the precentor's tribunal. Claude Joly, who was at this time precentor and Inspector of schools, watched over the rights and privileges of the "*petites écoles*" with such jealous care, that he condemned the Brothers and their superior, and suppressed the charity schools of Saint-Sulpice.

M. De La Salle was, for a moment, quite disconcerted. He held lawsuits in such abhorrence, that he was on the point of abandoning all, rather than lodge an appeal from the precentor's judgment. But he was given to understand that he had not the right to abandon so lightly, and simply on a point of monopoly, an enterprise that concerned, in the highest degree, the glory of God. Besides, M. Baudrand, whose rights as pastor were attacked by the precentor's judgment, obliged him by a formal command to appeal the case.

Accordingly an appeal was made to Parliament. Called upon to explain his case and plead his cause before the magistrates, our Saint, though backed up both by the sympathies of the people and by influential persons, betook himself to prayer as if he counted only on God's assistance. He went with his Brothers to Notre-Dame-des-Vertus, at Aubervilliers, and there passed a whole day in prayer, without taking any nourishment. He then presented his defence in writing, " with so much force and clearness, " says his biographer, " that in a short time the case terminated in his favour. " His schools were opened anew to his numerous pupils, and the masters of the pay-schools, defeated in their pretensions, left him in peace till the year 1699.

INTERNAL TRIALS OF THE INSTITUTE. — ILLNESS OF
THE HOLY FOUNDER, AND DEATH OF BROTHER
HENRI L'HEUREUX

1690-1691

To add to his trials, M. De La Salle saw his Institute on the point of being broken up from within at the same time that it was attacked from without.

The first two Brothers whom he had brought from Rheims to Paris, became unfaithful to their vocation, through a movement of secret jealousy, and abandoned the Institute. After having multiplied his efforts to keep them, the Saint wept for them as prodigal sons. From lack of teachers, M. De La Salle was now obliged to take a class and become a schoolmaster once more.

Indeed, other defections had taken place at Rheims. As long as this house was directed by Brother Henri L'Heureux, it prospered. But when this prudent and loved Brother was called to Paris, all was lost through the imprudence of his successor, Brother Jean-Henri. Not that Brother Jean-Henri was not an excellent religious; but his fervour, lacking maturity, had not that suppleness which the good direction of men requires. He appeared "severe and indiscreet." Under his government, eight Brothers successively abandoned the Institute; the community for country schoolmasters, which M. De La Salle had left in a flourishing condition, was emptied; the junior novitiate itself just escaped foundering. As this institution of young men was the great resource whence the Institute recruited its members, M. De La Salle, anxious for the future, resolved to transfer it to Paris.

The young novices arrived there in 1691. The oldest took the habit, and the others, while pursuing their studies, were employed at church to serve Mass. This concession, made solely out of deference to M. Baudrand, brought ruin on the work. In fact, the fervour of these youths, in surroundings not suitable for them, soon began to cool; and this religious nursery, which contained the gerin of the founder's hopes, was entirely destroyed. It was thus that in 1691 nearly all his work had crumbled. He himself just escaped being carried off by sickness, and this at the very moment when he was most needed by his small number of disciples.

In the midst of the overwhelming occupations which the government of the Institute entailed, he relaxed none of his ordinary austerities. It even seemed that his penances became more rigorous in proportion as

difficulties arose from without. In consequence of the weight of hair-shirts and iron chains, the deprivation of sleep, and his voluntary condemnation to insufficiency of food, he succumbed to excessive fatigue. Towards the close of 1690, though he felt he was already attacked, he wished to make the journey on foot to Rheims, where important business required his presence. But it brought only sorrow to his disciples, for they saw him so weak that the fear of losing him caused them great consternation.

However with the care lavished on him by his relatives and by his adopted family, he soon thought himself in a fit state to return to Paris; the desire that he had of withdrawing himself from the attentions of which he was the object made him face the fatigues of a second journey. But he had scarcely arrived in Paris, when a fresh attack of sickness seized him, and endangered his life. Admonished by his personal sufferings that there was but slight hope of recovery, the Saint wholly resigned himself to God's will and prepared for death.

His disconsolate disciples had recourse to all means, divine and human, to avert what they considered an irreparable misfortune. While besieging Heaven with fervent prayers, they called in the celebrated Dutch Doctor Helvetius, then in great repute in Paris for his medical skill. Helvetius had indeed a remedy for the disease, but a dangerous one, which might cause the death of the patient or radically cure him. Before administering this remedy, Helvetius wished the patient to receive the last sacraments. And, when M. Baudrand, pastor of Saint-Sulpice, came with a large number of the clergy to bring the Holy Viaticum to the pious dying man, Dr. Helvetius followed in the procession.

At this hour of terrible anguish, the weeping Brothers

pressed around the bed of their dear father. Profoundly touched by the sight of this heartbreaking spectacle of a family in tears, M. Baudrand addressed all present; he exhorted the father to resignation, promised the children that he would not leave them orphans, but would care for them as his own children. Then he begged the holy patient to bless the Brothers. With a faltering hand that had to be supported, M. De La Salle blessed his sons, saying: "I recommend you to have great union and to be thoroughly obedient." This was all the last will of that great soul.

Heaven heard the prayers of the Brothers, of the clergy, and of the people; for the remedy of Helvetius had a happy effect. The founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was saved for the continuation of his work.

But he seemed to recover strength only to begin over to suffer. In a few days after, the most sensitive spot in his heart was struck by the death of Brother Henri L'Heureux. This Brother was his beloved disciple. As unassuming as he was intelligent, as mild in his manner of acting as he was firm in his direction, Brother L'Heureux had won the sympathies of all. When M. De La Salle had requested that a Brother should be elected Superior, he received all the votes, and obedience to his commands was never difficult. In order that he might become a priest, and, one day take over the government of the Institute, M. De La Salle enjoined him to apply himself to the study of theology. The humble and obedient Brother, during all the time he passed in Paris, assiduously followed the course of the Sorbonne, and was just about to receive Holy Orders.

His death was a revelation for John Baptist. Our

Saint saw in it an intimation from Heaven that no member of the Institute should be a priest. From this moment he enacted the rule that no Brother could become a priest or even study Latin, and this rule has since then always been observed.

CHAPTER V.

THE
NOVITIATE OF VAUGIRARD

1691-1698

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE ESTABLISHES A HOUSE
OF RETREAT AND THEN A NOVITIATE AT
VAUGIRARD

1691-1692

The dreadful crisis through which the Institute passed would have disheartened a soul less strong and less confiding in God. From a human point of view, the work of John Baptist was seriously compromised. One half of his Brothers had abandoned him, and the fervour of the others had notably cooled; during three years, only one or two subjects presented themselves to fill the empty places; the health of the most fervent was seriously affected, and they were in danger of succumbing under excessive labour, like Brother L'Heureux. In the anguish into which this state of things threw him, the Saint had recourse to Heaven in retreat and prayer, and God re-

animated the courage of His servant. The grace of his vocation which, despite difficulties, urged him on to his goal, inspired him with the proper means to consolidate his tottering Institute.

His first care was to look for a well-aired and secluded house in the country, not far from Paris, where the masters might recuperate physically, and where he might assemble the Brothers for frequent recollection as well as for the annual retreat, and form them in a novitiate animated with the purest religious spirit. A vast enclosure, situated at the entrance to Vaugirard, appeared suitable for his purpose. It was a house of very unpretentious appearance, opening on a large garden, and far enough from the village not to be disturbed by its noise. M. De La Salle rented it in the month of September 1691.

The sick Brothers of the Paris community were the first to be transferred there. These young men, already exhausted by the unfavourable conditions in which they lived at the rue Princesse, were soon restored to health and strength in the pure air and silence of Vaugirard.

On the 8th of the following October, the holy founder convoked all the Brothers for a general retreat. All responded to the call of their dearly beloved father with as much eagerness as joy, happy to renew their religious fervour under his direction. Under the action of his stirring and persuasive words always impressed with a supernatural spirit, their hearts glowed with new ardour and yearned with a lively desire for perfection. Ten days did not appear to them sufficient to strengthen their souls in recollection, meditation, mortification and humility, and they begged leave to prolong the retreat. The zealous superior took advantage of these good dis-

positions to keep with him those who had had but a hurried novitiate, and they were replaced in their schools by young lay teachers, chosen from among those whom he had formed at Rheims.

It was during this prolonged retreat that, together with two of his dearest disciples, he contracted an additional engagement with regard to his Institute. Nicolas Vuyart and Gabriel Drolin appearing to him to be courageous enough not to be disheartened by any obstacles, and to uphold, even after his death, the work of the schools, he pronounced with them, November 21st 1691, the following vow : “ We take the vow of association and union to uphold the said establishment, and that we may not be free to abandon it, even though we should be the only three remaining in the said society, and should be obliged to beg alms and live on bread alone. ”

Bound by this secret engagement, M. De La Salle and his two companions formed the heart of the Institute. From this centre burning with zeal, life, strong and active, spread through all the members of the body. After a few months, the Brothers appeared as if transfigured by the double influence of solitude and grace. As soon as the Saint “ saw them as he desired, interior, recollected, mortified, penitent, humbly submissive and blindly obedient, ” he sent them back to their schools ; he was convinced that by forming perfect religious, he was thus preparing excellent masters for the poor.

As he had exercised on each the power of his personal action, he did not wish that this should be discontinued by separation. Desirous of continuing it even at a distance, he enjoined upon the Brothers, before dismissing them, to write to him every two months, in order to acquaint him with their interior dispositions and to

receive his advice. From this time the practice of "redemption" has been established in the Institute; this practice, without infringing on the reserved rights of the confessor, permits the superiors to strengthen in virtue the religious confided to their care. In nothing else is the strong and tender heart of the Saint better revealed than in this intimate correspondence of direction; for he regarded it as his duty to reply, no matter how briefly, to all his children. Not content with directing the Brothers by letters, he was pleased to visit them in their communities; and, during the seven years he passed at Vaugirard, he imposed upon himself the obligation to visit each community at least once a year.

The annual retreat, frequent visits, and the monthly correspondence, were the means employed by his paternal solicitude to maintain religious fervour, and union of mind and heart among the members of the Institute. All the Brothers, imbibing the same life from the soul of their father, loved one another and urged one another on to good by a holy emulation.

It is a fact of experience that God blesses the revival of the interior life in communities with an increase of subjects. This blessing did not fail to take place among the Brothers. Whereas the recruiting of the Institute seemed suspended for four years, it now visibly appeared that a movement of grace was about to raise up new subjects; for several postulants solicited admission among the Brothers.

It was found necessary to organize a regular novitiate for these young aspirants. Until now, the novitiate had been nothing more than a long retreat, scarcely sufficient to form the subjects to the Christian virtues and to initiate them in the elementary principles of pedagogy;

the too hasty employment of the subjects in the work of the schools hindered their consolidation in the religious life, and thus exposed them to those shortcomings and defections which M. De La Salle had so bitterly deplored. He was fully determined to avoid all precipitation in the future, so as to render the formation of subjects more solid and durable.

For this purpose, he opened a regular novitiate in the house of Vaugirard in September 1692. The Archbishop of Paris, recognizing the little Society of Brothers as a religious community, approved of the erection of this novitiate. M. Baudrand, pastor of Saint-Sulpice, after a momentary opposition to this project, generously helped it. Twelve aspirants were at first admitted, of whom six received the habit of the Brothers from the hands of the founder, on the first of November. If inconstancy caused gaps among these first recruits, God, who was watching over the Institute, sent new subjects to the novitiate, so that, in a short time, there were as many as thirty-five.

THE COMMUNITY OF VAUGIRARD. —

THE VIRTUES PRACTISED IN THIS COMMUNITY. —

TRIALS DURING THE FAMINE

1692-1694

No sooner had he opened the novitiate, than the holy founder consecrated himself entirely to it. Though he had called from Rheims Brother Jean-Henri, a religious of exemplary virtue, to make him master of novices, yet he himself did not neglect to exercise immediate and

personal action upon each of his children. Was there anything so dear to him in this world? Were not the hopes of his Institute centred in these young men? Would not the fervour of their novitiate be the source and the measure of the fruitfulness of their after-lives?

Full of these thoughts, John Baptist De La Salle actively occupied himself with the formation of his novices. He lived in the midst of them as long as his other occupations permitted, presided at their exercises, shared with them in the humblest offices of the house; he let no day pass without instructing them in their obligations, exhorting them to love the painful and laborious life of the Brothers and joyfully to suffer humiliations and privations. His word and example inspired the community with holy ardour.

The exercises of a truly religious novitiate absorbed every moment of the day. Three hours were devoted to mental prayer, which was made kneeling; the whole of the Little Office of the Most Blessed Virgin was recited standing and without any kind of support; there was an hour's spiritual reading in the forenoon, and as much in the afternoon. Prayer, reading, and manual work, filled up all the free moments. Silence, scrupulously observed, enveloped the community in an atmosphere of recollection, by means of which, God penetrating their souls, prayer was greatly relished and became the source of the sweetest consolations.

There was no chapel in the enclosure. But, every morning, in silence and two by two, the novices went to a neighbouring chapel, where the Saint celebrated Mass. The time of the august sacrifice was for them as a continuation of their meditation; they did not read, nor say any vocal prayers; with eyes modestly down-

cast, they conversed interiorly with God on the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Thus recollected, their religious life was all the more active, more fruitful, and in greater readiness for the acts of the Christian virtues.

Within this enclosure, where young souls prepared for future combats, all kinds of virtue were practised, and not without success; the most painful were the most sought after.

The first thing that attracted attention was the extreme poverty; for M. De La Salle had done nothing to give the remotest idea of comfort to a house that he called "his dear Bethlehem." Under roofs that were neither rain nor wind proof, in rooms with badly jointed doors, there was seen only a plank for bed, with a very hard straw mattress and a bolster filled with chaff instead of feathers; there were only two fairly good beds in the whole house, one for the superior, who never used it, and the other for the sick. Passing the night on these hard beds, with coarse sheets and a single blanket, the Brothers suffered all the inclemency of the winter's cold. In this austere dwelling no fire was ever seen; nor was there any question of furniture: a few rude benches and bare tables, these were all.

Their clothing matched their poverty. "I am convinced", says the biographer, "that, if the stockings, the shoes, the robes, the mantles and the hats of the Brothers, and all the household furniture of their community had been thrown in the street, they would have attracted the pitiful attention of the passers-by, but not one would have been tempted to pick them up."

There was nothing in the service of the table that could help to mitigate the rigours of this life of penance.

There was never any cooking in the novitiate of Vaugirard. But, every morning, one of the Brothers went to the school in the rue Princesse and brought back in a basket, the bread, the soup, and some coarse dishes, fitter to content mortification than to satisfy sensuality : the remnants of the community and seminary of Saint-Sulpice, as well as those of some other religious houses, though very poor themselves, supplied the refectories of the rue Princesse and the novitiate of Vaugirard. They were fortunate when the Brother did not keep them waiting too long, or when he was not despoiled of the alms on the way.

These meagre meals, at which wine was never served, gave those fervent religious many occasions to practise acts of charity. From these badly prepared and often insufficient articles of food, the share of the poor was set aside, thus sacrificing a portion of their frugal meal.

Not content with curbing their flesh by depriving it of nourishment, they imposed upon themselves rude flagellations. Willingly was the arm provided with the discipline ; the use of the hair-shirt and hair-girdle was in honour. The superior's example drew after it, along this penitential way, all the members of the community ; for he could not hide the pointed disciplines that he used.

However, the prudent founder relied much more on interior mortification ; and it was for this reason that he permitted exterior macerations, that they would prepare the way. " I prefer ", he used to say to his disciples, " an ounce of interior mortification to a pound of corporal macerations. " To those who appeared more eager for bodily mortification than for the curbing of the will, he said : " Ah ! my dear Brother, subdue your

will; that is the discipline that suits you and from which you will gather more fruit." In this way he inspired them with the love of humiliations and reprimands.

The custom of the daily accusation was introduced without difficulty. According to the custom in the ancient monasteries, the young Brothers came and accused themselves of their least faults; they joyfully accepted the imposed penance in expiation of them. Often, this penance was imposed at the beginning of supper and delayed the humble penitents; but, though they sat down to table after the others, they rose at the same time, not at all sad, but pleased with having doubly expiated their faults.

Far from cooling the ardour of this fervour, trials only stimulated their generosity. This was well seen during the winter of 1693, when the famine that raged over the whole of France, reduced the community of Vaugirard to extreme distress. In ordinary times, it was poverty; but in the time of famine, it was extreme scarcity. There was often lack of necessaries, and more than once the pious solitaries found in the refectory nothing but empty tables. In the hope of procuring resources more easily, and to escape from the attacks of the starving people who wandered about the village, the superior transferred his community to the rue Princesse, Paris. But Paris did not give abundance: a little black bread, some poor vegetable soup often formed the Brothers' menu. Sometimes the procurator mingled with the poor, and went to the doors of the rich where food was distributed.

One day, he was recognized, on account of his robe, by a lady of distinction. "What!" said she to him, "has the famine entered your house also?" "Does

the pastor leave in extreme want the poorest of his parish and even those whom he employs to instruct the indigent?" The Brother replied with simplicity that they lacked everything at the rue Princesse; that he was going with the last four *sous* of the community to buy a few vegetables for a meal which might perhaps be their last. "Go in peace," said the lady, "I am going to give orders." And, in fact, she went and saw M. Baudrand, pastor of Saint-Sulpice, who, distracted with the increasing destitution of his flock, had omitted to pay the Brothers their little allowance, without which they could not live.

Long and painful were the months of that bitter winter. But the virtue of the Brothers suffered nothing during that time of trial; so true is it that privations and sufferings are always a source of sanctification and progress for well-regulated communities. Vocations were not weakened, nor did their courage abate. With a constancy founded on the most lively faith, the holy founder roused the Brothers' confidence by often repeating to them these words of the Gospel: "Be not solicitous therefore, saying: What shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." He went so far in his abandonment to Providence, that, even when the distress was at its height, he did not refuse to receive those who presented themselves either to make a spiritual retreat or to enter the novitiate, though it was evident that, with many subjects, hunger alone held the place of vocation. God blessed the supernatural dispositions of His servant to such a degree, that, at the end of the famine, in the spring of 1694, when he

returned to Vaugirard, the Saint had the happiness of seeing his family complete. And while some religious communities saw their riches dwindle away during the famine, the Brothers had subsisted on the funds of their poverty without going into debt.

No sooner had they returned to the holy desert of Vaugirard, than the novitiate reassumed its aspect of religious austerity. Though nature did not find there wherewith to be gratified, yet the young Brothers loved this life of combat, in which, by the help of grace, they gained daily victories. With hearts filled with supernatural happiness, they submitted to the irresistible influence of the words and example of a superior who did not spare himself. Apart from the exercises of the community, John Baptist De La Salle passed entire nights in meditation; he often prayed kneeling on the bare and damp floor, and was overcome by sleep during these prolonged meditations without having taken care to protect himself against the intense cold. How often was he not found at the hour of rising, benumbed and crippled, extended on the icy cold floor! He contracted chronic rheumatism from this austere manner of life, which caused him crucial sufferings ever after. Even the most violent remedies could give only temporary relief to his sufferings. It was during a rheumatic crisis that he stretched himself on a kind of wooden gridiron, over a fire of odoriferous plants, that the smoke from which, by penetrating his bare flesh, might give him some relief. The remedy was not less painful than the evil, during which he thought of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, but to which he courageously submitted, so that he might be able to resume his occupations.

THE RETREAT OF 1694. —

PERPETUAL VOWS AND THE ELECTION OF A SUPERIOR

1694

The holy life led at Vaugirard had soon exercised its happiest influence on the rising Institute of the Brothers. Like a sacred nursery, the novitiate provided each community with fervent religious who renewed its spirit. Moreover, the senior Brothers came, each year, to revive their spiritual life under the direction of their father, and to submit themselves to the beneficial action of this blessed solitude. Under the sway of this powerful moral progress, and urged on by the great desire of their hearts towards perfection, the Brothers begged their superior to admit them to perpetual vows. Since 1684, he had permitted them to make but the temporary vow of obedience; this was not sufficient to satisfy their desires; they wished to consecrate themselves for ever to God by the three vows of religion.

Such sentiments went straight to his heart; could he have hoped for a sweeter consolation, as the price of his labours, than to see his children so ready for the sacrifice? Though he rejoiced at these holy dispositions, yet he did not depart one iota from his usual prudence, so well did he know how to regulate his zeal by wisdom.

After having consulted God in prayer, he chose twelve disciples, whom he judged the best prepared for perpetual vows. He called each of them separately to Vaugirard, there to make a week's retreat: in this way, he

made himself aware of their dispositions, tested their moral strength, completed their religious formation and put them in a fit state to undertake the final engagements.

When he had assured himself that these twelve Brothers ardently desired and could prudently pronounce perpetual vows, he convoked them all for the retreat. From Pentecost till Trinity Sunday their time was occupied with prayer and the superior's exhortations and conferences. In these conferences, at which each one was at liberty to express his opinion, it was decided that the assembled Brothers should not make the three vows of religion yet, but only perpetual vows of obedience and stability. Consequently, on Trinity Sunday morning, the superior with his twelve Brothers pronounced the first perpetual vows of the Institute in the following terms :

“ Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, prostrate with the most profound respect before Thy infinite and adorable Majesty, I consecrate myself entirely to Thee, to procure Thy glory as far as I am able, and as far as Thou wilt require of me. And for this purpose, I, JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE, priest, promise and vow to unite myself and to live in society with Brothers Nicolas Vuyart, Gabriel Drolin, etc., to keep together and by association, gratuitous schools, in any place whatever, even should I be obliged in order to do so, to ask alms or to live on bread alone, or to do anything in the said Society at which I shall be employed, whether by the Body of the Society or by the superiors who shall have the government thereof. Wherefore, I promise and vow obedience to the Body of this Society as well as to the superiors. Which vows of association

as well as of stability in the said Society and of obedience, I promise to keep inviolably all my lifetime, in testimony whereof I have signed. Done at Vaugirard on this sixth of June, Trinity Sunday, in the year one thousand six hundred and ninety-four. *Signed*: DE LA SALLE. ”

By this solemn act, the Institute of the Brothers took a new step in its constitution. It seemed to some of the Brothers that the moment was come to place the Congregation under the protection of the Holy See, and to solicit Letters of Approbation. Although the Saint had the most unequivocal veneration for the Roman Pontiff, he did not accede just then to the desire of the Brothers; he prudently wished to wait until the Rules of the Institute had undergone a longer test of experience, in order to be able to submit to the Pope a more studied project. It was only six years later that he sent the first two Brothers to Rome.

It appeared to him much more urgent to give the Institute its final form of government by electing a Brother for superior. If humility made him desire to descend to the lowest rank so as to practise obedience equally with the humblest of the Brothers, his foreseeing mind prompted him to organize the Institute such as he conceived before God. At the death of Brother L'Heureux, he laid down the established principle that no member of the Congregation could become a priest, and that no priest could enter the Institute. A society composed of Brothers, under pain of being governed by a stranger, should therefore have a Brother for its superior. From this moment, his position at the head of the community appeared to him to be an anomaly and a danger. To accustom the Brothers to obey one of them-

selves, and also to establish, during his lifetime, the tradition in the eyes of men of the world, he desired that a Brother should be elected in his place, esteeming himself happy to be kept to serve in the lowest employments.

Convinced that the occasion was opportune for the execution of his project, he exposed his views to the twelve newly professed on the day following Trinity Sunday 1694. In order to win them over to his way of thinking, he spoke to them for a long time in the most insinuating manner. But if the Brothers shared the opinion of their superior on the question of principle, they, however, resolutely declared that, as long as he lived, they would not accept any other superior than himself. It was he who had brought them together, who had fashioned their souls to the religious life, who had directed them during fifteen years; therefore, an exception in favour of the founder of the Institute could not be regarded as a breach of the essential Rule of the Society.

This frame of mind of the Brothers alarmed the Saint; he conjured them to relieve him of a burden that weighed too heavily on his shoulders, and invited them to proceed with the election. The humble disciples were silent in deference to their master; after half an hour's prayer, the election began, but all the votes were for John Baptist De La Salle. Confused and troubled at the result, the Saint paternally reproached his children. Had they not planned this result? Did they allow themselves to be guided by the spirit of God alone? He asked for another trial, and ordered a second election; but the second only confirmed the first. Thus defeated by the confidence and affection of his children, John

Baptist was resigned. To console him, the Brothers gave him to understand that, perhaps, a day would come, when the Society would be more consolidated, and then he would be allowed to resign the office of superior.

So seriously did the interests of the Institute seem to him to be endangered by this affair, that he caused to be inserted in the act of his election a formal clause, signed by the twelve Brothers, excluding forever from the government of the Institute any priest or ecclesiastic engaged in Holy Orders, as well as any person that had not made vows in the Society. The future showed the wisdom of this determination; for the great trials that afterwards befell the Saint had no other origin than the attempted efforts to substitute another priest in his place in the direction and government of the Institute.

THE WORKS OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
IN THE SOLITUDE OF VAUGIRARD

1694-1698

In 1694, the Saint's authority was not contested, and he was able to continue, immediately after the retreat, the multifarious works which the silence of Vaugirard rendered easy. If from time to time he left his dear solitude, it was only to visit the schools and to bring to the Brothers words of paternal encouragement along with the happiness of his presence. But he was always in a hurry to return to his dear novitiate. There lived the cherished portion of his Institute, which

he cultivated with care as being the future harvest, and to which God was pleased to give the twofold benediction of value and number. Determined not to send these young recruits into the midst of the fray before having made of them well trained soldiers, he kept them with him as long as their formation required.

Hence he refused several offers that were made him to open schools. He did not comply even with the express petition that was addressed to him by his friend, Paul Godet Des Marais, Bishop of Chartres, for the gratuitous schools of his episcopal city. Rather than weaken himself by dispersing his forces, he preferred to concentrate all his efforts upon the existing schools, convinced, moreover, that Providence would not fail to provide new occasions, when he would be able to furnish Brothers.

The period between 1694 and 1698 was therefore a time of recollection and interior progress. Profiting by the time that was at his disposal, the Saint began to write the Rules and Constitutions of the Institute. Like all the founders of Religious Orders, he had done nothing during the last fifteen years, in virtue of a preconceived design; he had allowed himself to be guided by the hand of God along the way on which he had entered. Some practices had been introduced into his community by force of circumstances and the necessities of a society of schoolmasters. Many experiments had been made, with the result that only those which were considered practicable and harmonized with the exigencies of the teachers' life were retained. In writing his Rules, John Baptist De La Salle did nothing more than codify customs that experience had shown to be useful and wise. Besides, this code was not final; for more

than twenty years he continued to study and perfect it, in proportion as the experiences of life gave him new light. When in 1717, the General Assembly besought him to fix the text, he put into writing only what the Brothers had been practising for nearly forty years.

The Brothers had as much need of a guide to direct them in their schools, as they had of religious Rules to inspire their moral life. From the very beginning, John Baptist De La Salle had given his disciples enlightened counsels on the art of teaching children, on the order and discipline that should prevail in the classes, and on the method they should follow to preserve the virtue of the children and induce them to love religion. These counsels were so much the more valuable, as pedagogy was then only in its infancy.

By means of the sound judgment for which he was always distinguished, John Baptist knew how to profit by all that was good in the parish school; but he never shrank from innovations that appeared necessary. Instead of teaching children to read by means of Latin books, he unhesitatingly substituted French books; such an act, which, at present would appear the only sensible thing to do, was, at that time, most daring, for it made a breach in an ancient and commonly practised custom. John Baptist effected a still more advantageous revolution, when, in place of the individual system of teaching, he introduced the simultaneous method; before his time, the master taught each pupil separately, which, of necessity, reduced the number of scholars in each class; he, on the contrary, established the system by which the Brothers could instruct, by speaking louder, an entire group of children at the

same time, which gave the masters the advantage of being able to direct a large class successfully.

The outcome of these pedagogic directions was the *School Management*, a book of rare merit, written by the founder of the Brothers, but compiled by collecting the experiments of his disciples. It was not printed during the Saint's lifetime; in the novitiate, the Brothers made copies of it, which they took with them when going to make new foundations. The first edition was printed the year after his death.

Besides this directory for the masters, he composed some schoolbooks for the pupils. He did not disdain to compile an A B C book for the youngest children, while for the older ones he composed two books of great value: *The Rules of Politeness* and *The Duties of a Christian*. The first is an excellent treatise on politeness, in which the rules of good manners and the virtues that make an upright man are taught with as much good sense as piety; the second is an abridged theology, in which the truths of faith and the obligations of Christian life are clearly exposed; an admirable book, by which thousands of children, while learning to read it, have been taught their religion.

These works did not absorb the Saint's time to such a degree that he found none for works of zeal. He was glad to receive into his house ecclesiastics who wished to make a retreat under his direction; they had the same fare as the community, with the exception of a small quantity of wine; but this poverty disposed them all the more for the holy influences of grace on their souls. Sometimes illustrious visitors came to converse with him: among others, he often received the Bishop of Chartres, Paul Godet Des Marais, who had remained

faithful to an old seminary friendship; M. Bäühin, a priest of Saint-Sulpice, with whom he had been in close friendship at the seminary and to whom he was attached by the same love of prayer and mortification, and whom he had chosen for his spiritual director when he arrived at Vaugirard; then there was the Count De Charmel, a gentleman, who, touchèd by grace, had broken with the court and its pleasures, and now led a life of penance near the Brothers' house.

Incorrigible youths were frequently brought to the Saint. By the influence of his meekness and kindness, he won them and gained entrance to their hearts; his patience never wearied either because of their indocility or their faults: in time, the spirit of God that acted through him mastered their souls, and they seldom escaped its influence. It was in this way that hardened sinners for whom his house had at first been like a prison, were glad that they had found therein a holy sanctuary where the grace of conversion had come to them.

So many virtues and so many apostolic works could not long remain hidden from the Archbishop of Paris. Mgr De Noailles did not less appreciate them than Mgr De Harlai, and when he became Archbishop of Paris, in 1695, he renewed the approbation and the privileges granted to John Baptist De La Salle by his predecessor. He even loaded him with new favours. For, having put all the private chapels of the diocese under interdict, in 1697, on account of the notable injury they did to the parish churches, he permitted the Saint to erect a private oratory in the novitiate. John Baptist gladly profited by this favourable occasion to have the Most Blessed Sacrament enter under the roof of his humble dwelling,

and, in spite of his poverty, he took every precaution to prepare a worthy sanctuary for its reception. Henceforth, the novices assisted at Holy Mass within the enclosure of their solitude, except on the first Thursday of each month, when, out of deference to the parish priest, they were conducted by their superior to the parish church of Vaugirard. The arrangements of this oratory were provisional, for there was already question of removing the community to Paris.

On leaving the village where they had so much prayed and where they had so valiantly mortified themselves, the fervent religious carried away with them the liveliest souvenirs of their stay in this holy desert; they preserved, above all, that vigorous character of soul, which they had received there. If the Institute, during its seven years of solitude, appeared stationary and barren in new foundations, it was strengthening itself from within, and preparing for the happy extension which was about to commence, and also for the furious tempests which were to burst upon it before long. Vaugirard was the Manresa, or the place of recollection and interior growth, of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

CHAPTER VI.

DEVELOPMENT AND OPPOSITION

1698-1705

THE BROTHERS IN THE GRAND'MAISON. — THE WORKS
ORGANIZED THEREIN

1698

The religious family of John Baptist De La Salle had not ceased to increase since 1691 ; in 1698, it numbered more than sixty members. The modest roof of Vaugirard no longer sufficed to lodge so many persons at the same time, and, rather than forego the precious practice of retreats in common, the vigilant superior determined to look for a larger house. At the risk of being partly deprived of the invigorating country air, he desired, for the better accommodation of the Brothers, to return to Paris, and reside in the parish of Saint-Sulpice, where, moreover, the new parish priest invited him.

M. Baudrand, struck with paralysis since two years, had resigned his parish to a man of great piety and solid

virtue, M. De La Chétardye. This good priest had been occupied until then in provincial seminaries ; he knew neither the Brothers nor their holy founder. But as soon as he became acquainted with the work done in the Christian Schools, he conceived the liveliest sympathy for it and bestowed on it marks of the most generous devotedness. He loved to the end the schools and the masters who conducted them ; if he had the regrettable misunderstandings with their superior which we shall have to relate, he always retained for him the veneration which his eminent holiness had inspired from their first meeting. During one of his visits to Vaugirard, he persuaded M. De La Salle that so small and so dilapidated a house was not at all suitable to the wants of the Brothers ; moreover, he said he should be glad to have again in his parish so fervent a Community, from which virtue shone out like a blazing furnace of Christian life.

On the road to Vaugirard, and near the Carmelite Gate, between the Luxembourg and the country, there was a large property with spacious buildings and gardens : it was called Notre-Dame-des-Dix-Virtus. It had been inhabited by the Annunciade nuns of Saint-Nicolas of Lorraine. The proprietor's price was not unreasonable, because strange rumours, which were circulated among the people that the house was haunted, kept would be tenants away. Thanks to M. De La Chétardye's generosity, and to that of a great benefactress, Madame Des Voisins, John Baptist De La Salle was enabled to rent the place for sixteen hundred *livres*; in the month of April 1698, the novitiate was transferred here.

The poor furniture of Vaugirard appeared so miser-

able and so insuitable for what was strictly necessary, that Madame Des Voisins gave seven thousand *livres* to put the house in a habitable condition. The Saint commenced by furnishing and beautifully ornamenting the house of God. As the old chapel of the Annunciades was too small, he enlarged it by building a choir. He invited his friend, the Bishop of Chartres, to bless it, and it was dedicated to the martyr St. Cassian. It was not without reason that he put his community under the patronage of a confessor of the faith, who, being a schoolmaster, had been martyred by his own pupils.

He was very careful that the conveniences of the new dwelling should in no way weaken the virtue of his dear disciples : and, for this reason, nothing was changed in the regulation followed at Vaugirard. At Notre-Dame-des-Dix-Virtus, which they called the Grand'-Maison, the same silence was observed, the same exercises of piety and of mortification were practised, and the table was not less frugal. This austere manner of life maintained fervour in the Institute and merited success for its works.

By the divine blessing, the Grand'Maison soon became so flourishing, that the wise superior saw that the hour was come to divide the several offices of the community and to place them under the charge of Brothers capable of directing them : from that moment he ceased to be the only one burdened with the whole administration of the Institute. Brother Jean-Henri was made the Director of the novitiate, and gave the example of a sincerely fervent life until his death, which occurred in the following year. A procurator, Brother Thomas, received charge of the temporal affairs, for which office he had a particular aptitude. To Brother Jean-Chryso-

lome was confided the care of the sick, and he assiduously and piously discharged this office of infirmarian, until he fell a victim in 1705, to the epidemic which decimated the Brothers of Chartres. Brother Jean, one of the most ancient in the Institute, received the mission of forming the young masters by lessons on school management, and of guiding their first efforts by inspecting their classes.

Thus released from a part of his former occupations, John Baptist De La Salle was at liberty to direct his solicitude to other works which called for his zeal, and which were to contribute to the development of his Institute. Without mentioning the Brothers' retreats, the visits to the communities in the provinces, counsels given to the ecclesiastics and the sinners that were led to him by grace, he lent himself with apostolic devotedness to two new works proposed by the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice.

In the year 1698, he received into the Grand'Maison fifty Irish youths, exiled for their faith, whose families greatly desired that they should be educated and rendered capable of exercising an employment befitting their station. When the king of England, James the Second, whom William of Orange had supplanted in 1688, desired to give these young men an education at once Christian and liberal, the Archbishop of Paris and the pastor of Saint-Sulpice agreed between them to recommend him to send them to the house of John Baptist De La Salle. The Saint received them with such affability and worked at their formation so assiduously, that, during a visit which James the Second paid the Grand'Maison a few months later, he received the most flattering testimonies of satisfaction and thanks. This boarding

school, the first that the Institute directed, did not exist long : because the students that were confided to the Brothers were soon in a position to fill the different offices that were destined for them.

The creation of a Sunday school was a much greater novelty for that epoch. The parish priest of Saint-Sulpice, very desirous of reaching all the souls of his parish, had undertaken to gather together, every Sunday, all the young workmen and apprentices who were occupied during the rest of the week. It was to John Baptist De La Salle that he appealed to open and direct this Sunday school work. The Saint, who never refused any work of zeal, opened his own house to the young men, and, in 1699, “ on a Sunday, at noon, in the enclosure of the novitiate, was inaugurated a Christian Academy for all the boys who were not over twenty years of age.” This institution was a complete success, for it soon numbered two hundred pupils. The object of these Sunday reunions was not profane amusement; study and piety formed their chief attraction. The least instructed were taught reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling, the same as in the “ *petites écoles* ”; the more advanced learned geometry, architecture and drawing, a real programme of secondary education. After having devoted two or three hours to intellectual work, they received a catechism lesson; after which, one of the Brothers closed each meeting with a short “ spiritual exhortation ” or reflection. As long as it lasted, — about five or six years, — the Sunday school wrought in the young men who attended it a happy moral transformation.

EXTENSION OF THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARIS. —
SEMINARY FOR COUNTRY SCHOOLMASTERS
AT SAINT-HIPPOLYTE

1698-1699

While undertaking these works which he did not consider foreign to his vocation, John Baptist never lost sight of the principal object of his mission, the work of gratuitous schools for the people. And, therefore, now that the number of the members of his Institute had increased, he gladly entertained all the proposals made regarding this object.

The first came to him from M. De La Chétardye. The pastor of Saint-Sulpice had already two charity schools in his immense parish, one in the rue Princesse, and the other at Pont-Royal; but the poor in the district of the "Incurables" were without masters. It was for these that the third gratuitous school was opened in the rue Saint-Placide, in the year 1697. The success of this school was so rapid that it had, in the following year, five classes, containing four hundred children. One day as M. De La Chétardye was visiting these classes, accompanied by Madame Des Voisins, he could not disguise his joy at the sight of this multitude of children, and, addressing the holy founder, he exclaimed: "Ah! Sir, what a work! Where would this crowd of children be at this moment, if they were not gathered here? They would be seen running in the streets, corrupting one another; living in complete ignorance of all principles of morality and religion, and making, at their expense, the fatal apprenticeship of wickedness

and sin." He then turned to the children and questioned them on the mysteries of religion, and he was so delighted with their answering, that he embraced the Brothers in testimony of his satisfaction. Madame Des Voisins was not less pleased with these happy results of the charity schools, and more than once, afterwards, gave proof of her sympathy in abundant donations.

Two more schools were shortly opened in the parish of Saint-Sulpice : one at the Grand'Maison, the other near the Porte Saint-Michel, rue des Fossés-de-Monsieur-le-Prince. The first of these had only a few pupils, because the Carmelite district was thinly peopled ; but it was useful as a practising school for the young masters of the novitiate, whom Brother Jean was preparing for the schools. The second, on the other hand, received so many pupils, that it was found necessary to put four Brothers in it ; but it existed only a few years, either from lack of benefactors, or because M. De La Chétardye had sacrificed it to the storm that was raised a few years later through the jealousy of the writing masters.

The fruits of grace produced in the schools of Saint-Sulpice were so abundant and manifest, that they could not escape notice. Michel Lebreton, parish priest of Saint-Hippolyte, in the Saint-Marcel quarter, desiring similar benefits for his parish, appealed to the devotedness of John Baptist De La Salle. Two Brothers, one of whom was Nicolas Vuyart, were sent there to open a gratuitous school, " to teach the catechism, and reading, and writing to the poor children of the parish."

But this school was soon but a branch of a more important institution, a new training school for country schoolmasters. The one founded at Rheims had sup-

plied the villages of Champagne with such excellent Christian teachers, that the superior of the Brothers, since his arrival in Paris, had nourished the hope of re-establishing it there. Faithful to his first ideas, he would never consent to send a Brother alone to a country school, so that his Institute was destined only for large towns and important boroughs. He clearly understood that, for the completion of his work of the education of the poor, it would be necessary to prepare lay masters for the villages. At that time, there was no normal school for teachers : the idea struck him whether it would not be entering into the plans of Providence to work in this direction ?

For this purpose, finding the pastor of Saint-Hippolyte to be a broadminded man, capable of great designs, he requested him to favour the opening of a training school for lay masters. Circumstances so promptly aided the execution of this project, that the school for the masters was opened in the rue Ourcine, close by the charity school for poor children. Some pious, intelligent young men from the country soon filled the house. They were dressed in secular. As they were lodged, fed and instructed gratuitously, the only payment expected was good will. From half-past four in the morning until nine o'clock at night, the time was employed in exercises of piety, study and recreation. Exercises of piety occupied an important place in their life; by means of meditation and the practice of the examen of conscience, they exercised themselves in the strong Christian virtues. The programme of their studies comprised the catechism, reading and writing, arithmetic, weights and measures, and plain chant. The plain chant was of the utmost importance for them, because everywhere the

country schoolmasters were also the conductors of the parish choirs.

This normal school for masters was confided to Brother Nicolas Vuyart, who also had the direction of the school for children. This Brother, in 1691, had made a vow, together with Gabriel Drolin, "to ask alms and to live on bread alone" rather than abandon the work of the schools. At this time he was very faithful, and his superior rightly relied on him. Under his direction, the normal school prospered, and provided excellent lay teachers, even for some schools of Paris. The parish priest of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, when writing about John Baptist De La Salle, in 1719, referred to the usefulness of this normal school in the following terms: "I and my country owe him eternal obligations. He had the charity to prepare for me, in the faubourg Saint-Marcel, four young men for the schools, who came from him so well trained and so full of zeal that, had they found in the ecclesiastics of the country the wherewith to feed and cultivate the good dispositions with which he had inspired them, they would have established a most useful community for the province."

THE FOUNDING OF SCHOOLS OUTSIDE PARIS :
CHARTRES, CALAIS, ROME, TROYES, AVIGNON

1699-1703

The authorities outside of the capital did not content themselves with secular masters trained at Saint-Hippolyte; they asked for Brothers also, envious to see them at Paris and in Champagne. Thanks to the number

of recruits that had enriched Vaugirard, the work of gratuitous Christian schools entered on a movement of great expansion.

The first request which the founder complied with was that of the Bishop of Chartres. Paul Godet Des Marais, importuned by the parish priests of his episcopal city to open schools for the poor, had, during five years, earnestly begged for Brothers, when, at last, his friend, John Baptist De La Salle, sent him some to conduct six gratuitous classes for boys. They were opened October 12th 1699, in the parishes of Saint-Hilaire and Saint-Michel, and were soon crowded with children.

The new schools did not lack the Bishop's sympathies. The pious prelate took pleasure in visiting them; his gentleness charmed the children, his paternal affection encouraged the Brothers. Perhaps he took advantage of his friendship for John Baptist De La Salle to meddle a little too much with the direction of the Brothers and even with the government of the Institute. Several Brothers having fallen sick from sheer exhaustion, charity urged the good Bishop to visit and console them in their house; he invited them to relax something of the austerity of their Rule, took away their spiritual books as well as the instruments of penance of which their fervour might make an indiscreet use; "but", says the biographer, "their fidelity to their obligations overcame his remonstrances, and all that he could do was to supply them abundantly with what their infirmities required."

In this unflinching attitude, the Brothers were only following the example of their father, for John Baptist De La Salle, notwithstanding his deference for the Bishop of Chartres, would never consent to a violation of the Rules of the Institute to please him. This was

clearly seen during a visit which he paid to Chartres in 1702. The Bishop made himself the echo of the oft repeated complaint that the Rules imposed on religious schoolmasters were too severe; the holy founder bowed his head under the criticism of which he was the object; but, before his conscience and God, he did not believe that he was warranted in changing the Rules of his Congregation, because he was thoroughly convinced that austere rules, strictly observed, render Religious Orders prosperous and lasting.

Even on points of secondary importance, the founder knew how to maintain their observance. The good Bishop would have wished to send the Brothers, on Sundays, into the several churches of the city, that their behaviour might give edification and spread piety throughout all the parishes. However praiseworthy this intention, John Baptist De La Salle could not agree to it, alleging that the Brothers' place in church should be with their pupils to watch over them and inspire them with the religious respect and devotion due to the divine office.

This noble independence in regard to a benefactor and friend did not less assert itself whenever there was question of school methods. Godet Des Marais did not admit that the children should be taught to read French before learning to read Latin, and he requested John Baptist De La Salle to return to the traditional method, at least in the schools of Chartres.

John Baptist, with his twenty years' experience, saw too many disadvantages in beginning with Latin to sacrifice his method. He drew up a Memorial in which, in language full of sound sense, he demonstrated : 1st, that it was easier to teach reading by

commencing with French, which the pupils understood; 2nd, that it was much more advantageous for poor children, who generally remain only a short time at school, and for whom Latin would never be of any use, promptly to learn to read their mother-tongue. The Bishop could not but bow to the solid reasonings of the happy innovator.

Tenacious guardian of the Rules, the Saint voluntarily submitted that he, personally, should be criticised both by friends and by guests. To some, his dress appeared too simple and too clumsy; his singular habit, his thick-soled shoes, his broad-brimmed hat, were laughed at by others; his cloak, old and threadbare, was secretly taken away and replaced by a new one. The humble priest accepted all with good grace, so neglectful was he of self in order to safeguard the work of God.

The opening of the schools at Calais followed very closely upon the founding of those at Chartres. About the close of 1699, a young ecclesiastic of Calais, who was a theological student at the seminary of the Bons-Enfants, named M. Ponthon, having seen the pupils of Saint-Sulpice silent and in good order, conceived the project of procuring for his town such a salutary institution. He wrote about it to his uncle, a venerable old man, who was the dean of Calais, and conjured him to call into his parish these clever educators, who had the talent of transforming the turbulent youths of a large district of Paris. The venerable pastor of Calais immediately became possessed with the desire to have the Brothers, and, thanks to the assistance of the civil magistrates and of the governor of Boulogne, he had the happiness to install two Brothers, July 19th 1700, in classes filled with poor children. Five years later, a

second school of the Brothers was opened for the sons of sailors.

A number of friends declared themselves the zealous patrons of these schools. Among these, M. Gense distinguished himself; he was a virtuous layman, who was kept from aspiring to the priesthood by his humility, but his ardour in combating the Huguenots placed him amongst the most intrepid of apostles. His greatest happiness was to come and take a little rest in the Brothers' house, and then, it gave him great pleasure to encourage them with his burning and stirring words: "You are", said he to them, "like the gleaners who follow the steps of the reapers, to pick up, here and there, the neglected and trodden ears... If you ascend neither the altar nor the pulpit, if you enter neither the tribunal of penance nor the baptistery, if your functions do not put the thurible into your hands to offer incense to the Most High in His temple, at least you have the honour of preparing living temples for Him and of working for the salvation of abandoned youth. If your ministry is the least brilliant, it is also the least exposed. If there is any in the Church more honourable, there is scarcely any more useful."

At the same time that he sent Brothers to Calais, John Baptist De La Salle entrusted to his dearest disciple, Gabriel Drolin, the mission of founding an establishment in Rome. The founding of a school in the centre of Catholicity, under the very eyes of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, satisfied the ardent wishes of the Brothers and their superior. The Saint saw at once, by this step, the means of founding his work on the immovable rock of the Church, and thus expressing the attachment of his heart and soul to the Roman faith, and finally,

that it would lead, when it would be God's pleasure, to the obtaining of the approbation of the Rules of his Institute as well as the authorization to make the three vows of religion.

Brother Gabriel Drolin, accompanied by an inconstant confrère who soon abandoned him, set out about the month of June 1700; he was poor, without experience, but had a heart full of hope. Five years passed before he was able to open a gratuitous school for poor boys : being the only Brother in the city, a stranger, an object of suspicion, obliged to beg food and lodging from a French family whose children he educated, often denounced to his superior as unfaithful to his Rules, though he remained faithful to the spirit of his Institute, Brother Gabriel was preparing in humiliation and tears the success that his Congregation was to have in Rome. It was in 1710, that he obtained one of the "Pope's schools"; till then he had to hide his name, and had even been obliged to have recourse to a third person to communicate with his superior. The latter, though at a great distance, anxiously followed the work of Brother Gabriel, and sent him from time to time, hearty words of encouragement and comfort, such as : " I assure you that I have great tenderness and affection for you, and often pray to God for you. " If Brother Gabriel had not the happiness of seeing his dearly loved father again, he had at least the consolation of contributing to the granting of the Bull which was delivered January 26th 1725. More fortunate than Nicolas Vuyart, whose fall we shall soon see, he continued faithful and steadfast till the end, and, having returned to France in 1728, made his religious profession at Avignon, into the hands of Brother Timo-

thée. What a sympathetic soul that good Brother Gabriel possessed: his memory is still held in benediction and deservedly honoured in the Institute.

Eight months after Brother Gabriel's departure for Rome, John Baptist De La Salle signed a contract, by which he bound himself to give Brothers for the Saint-Nizier school, at Troyes. The salary, indeed, was not liberal, since it was scarcely two hundred and sixty *livres* for two Brothers; but the Saint accepted these conditions, says the biographer, "for fear of losing the opportunity of instructing the poor of so large a town, through too much regard for a vile interest; provided the Brothers had what was necessary, he was satisfied."

About this time also, he received a letter from the South, inviting him to open a school at Avignon. It was the lord of Château-Blanc, the Pope's treasurer in the Comtat-Venaissin, who appealed to his zeal to instruct the poor. Our Saint eagerly accepted this proposal: his great desire was to work in the territory of the Roman Pontiff; from Avignon, he could easily enter into the provinces of the South. Three Brothers were sent, and opened the first school in 1703. The new masters soon gained the confidence of the people and the sympathy of the most respectable persons of the city; so that, in a short time, the classes were too small to contain the pupils, and, in the month of March 1705, the lord of Château-Blanc bought a house for the Brothers, large enough for twenty persons.

The establishment at Avignon soon became as a second centre for the Institute. From there, the work was to spread over the neighbouring provinces; the Brothers of the South went there to hold their assem-

blies and for the renewal of their vows. It was through Avignon that the Saint was to send his letters and monetary assistance to Rome; it was at Avignon that he was to get his books approved and printed, and from there they were to be sent forth into the schools. On his visits to Provence and Languedoc, Avignon was to be as his place of retreat after his apostolic journeys.

But let us not anticipate the future, and, since the Saint was to earn all his successes with sufferings, let us turn back to assist at the beginning of his many and great trials.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE IS CALUMNIATED
WITH THE ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS, AND DEPOSED
FROM HIS OFFICE OF SUPERIOR

1702

During the forty years that he consecrated to the work of the gratuitous schools, John Baptist De La Salle had to suffer constantly; a work of this importance could not be achieved without much opposition and deception. But in 1702, the difficulties increased, a powerful opposition rose against him, and treachery began; the Saint entered upon the way of sorrows which he was never to leave. If it be true that all great religious enterprises are founded on the cross, then the Institute of the Brothers reposes on a solid base.

The first difficulties arose from a difference with M. De La Chétardye.

The parish priest of Saint-Sulpice, a man of profound piety, austere and hard for himself, did not approve the severity of the Rules of the Institute. On several occa-

sions, he had begged the founder to mitigate the Rules of the Brothers and novices, and to moderate the imprudent ardour of the master of novices as well as that of the director of the schools. John Baptist De La Salle, always humble and deferential in things permitted, showed himself very courageous in defending the Rules of the Institute, so convinced was he that the stability of the regulations was absolutely necessary for the solidity of the work. His firmness was attributed to obstinacy, and the imprudences of his subordinates were imputed to him. To judge him incapable of governing his community was the next step: and that step was taken.

Two acts of indiscretion caused the storm to burst. Two young Brothers, considering themselves to have been rather harshly treated, one by Brother Michael, the master of the novices, and the other by Brother Ponce, director of the school of the rue Princesse, carried their grievances to the pastor of Saint-Sulpice. If John Baptist had been present, his meekness would have calmed their anger, and nothing of these regrettable indiscretions would have transpired; but he was at that time visiting the schools of Chartres. M. De La Chétardye received the complaints of the two malcontents with so much the more readiness, as they confirmed the idea that he himself had already formed of the extreme severities of the house, and of the superior's powerlessness to put a stop to them. Perhaps the desire he had of having all the schoolmasters in his parish directly under his own authority influenced the resolution he then took.

He wrote out a Memorial respecting the incriminated acts as well as the general conduct of the commu-

nity of the Brothers, and put it into the Archbishop's hands. M. Pirot, vicar general, was charged by the Archbishop to make an inquiry into the state of the Grand'Maison. In a few days after, John Baptist went to pay his respects to the Cardinal De Noailles, and was astounded when he heard these startling words : " Monsieur, you are superior no longer. I have provided your community with another. " This, indeed, was as humiliating as it was unexpected, and there was yet enough of pride left in our Saint to feel the affront. But if nature was not dead in him, it was at least under control. So he humbly bowed his head under the decision that struck him ; he did not complain ; he asked for no explanation ; he attempted no justification of his conduct ; on the contrary, he rather felt the joy of deliverance. During sixteen years he had made vain efforts to be delivered from the superiorship ; and now Providence intervened, by legitimate authority, to satisfy the aspirations of his humility. Far from complaining, he had no other anxiety than that of preparing the Brothers to receive the new superior, sent by the Archbishop. We shall let the parish priest of Villiers-le-Bel relate the painful scenes that took place at the Grand'Maison on the occasion ; he gave a very touching account of them in a letter addressed to M. Guiart, pastor of Saint-Pierre de Laon.

He wrote : " In a second visit, M. Pirot introduced to them, on the part of His Eminence, M. l'abbé Bricot, to be their temporal superior. On hearing the word superior, the majority of the Brothers cried out that they recognized no other superiors than His Eminence and M. De La Salle. The vicar general reminded them that they should obey His Eminence and, showing them the order

signed by the Cardinal, which if they refused to obey, said they should be punished as rebels. The Brothers replied that they honoured His Eminence very much, but they could not agree to accept any superior but M. De La Salle, that they would sooner die than have any other, that they were ready to go to prison, even to leave the country and go wherever it would please His Eminence to send them, and even to death.

“The vicar general tried to calm them and to persuade them to alter their determination, by pointing out to them the good qualities interior as well as exterior of the new superior; but the Brothers answered that M. De La Salle had not only all these qualities, but many others also, more excellent still. And they commenced to enumerate them and to say, among other things, that he was kind and gentle to others, but severe for himself; that he ordered them nothing that he would not do and did not do himself, and it would be impossible to give them any one who could equal him, either in the art of governing or in all his other excellent virtues and qualities.

“While the said Brothers made these replies, M. De La Salle was present, and earnestly begged them on his knees, with tears in his eyes and hands joined, to submit to the orders of the Cardinal, which had just been intimated to them by the vicar general; but they replied that though they were ready to obey him in everything else, yet in this particular, they could not and would not. The vicar general, seeing that he could not change their minds, or induce them to obey the orders of the Cardinal, either by his reasoning or by the entreaties of M. De La Salle, but that he rather irritated them more and more and made them more and more

determined in their resolve, retired along with M. Bricot, the new intended superior, quite covered with shame and confusion. M. De La Salle accompanied them to the door, his eyes filled with tears at seeing the disobedience and stubbornness of his Brothers (if one may so call their zeal and affection for M. De La Salle, and their determination and constancy to maintain him in his authority of superior); he begged his pardon and made him a thousand excuses for their unwillingness to submit. For he would have wished to be relieved from the office of superior, and it would have given him great pleasure and quite an extraordinary satisfaction.

“ The vicar general had scarcely returned, when he commenced to publish and praise the zeal and affection that the Brothers had for M. De La Salle, saying to the Cardinal: “ If all the members of religious communities were so united to their superiors, and had such affection for them as M. De La Salle’s Brothers had for him, we should not see so much disorder in Paris. ” He then related all that had happened, and that the Brothers refused to listen to any reasoning with regard to accepting the new superior.

“ This irritated him so much, that he sent at once to the court of justice to ascertain how to deal with this matter, and to punish the Brothers for their want of submission to his orders.

“ Some time after this, the vicar general came to tell M. De La Salle that if he did not make his Brothers obey the Cardinal’s orders, he was commanded to announce to him his exile. M. De La Salle replied that he, the vicar general, was well aware of the efforts he had made to induce them to obey, but without success. With

regard to his exile, he was quite ready to go wherever His Eminence might be pleased to send him; what consoled him was that he would find God everywhere, that it would be a happiness for him to suffer, and that, as to food and clothing, he could not have less than he actually had.

“The vicar general left him... without having executed his orders, admiring his disinterestedness and indifference. The Brothers, having learned this news, resolved to pass the whole day and night, without eating or drinking, in prayer, to implore the assistance of Heaven in their anguish and affliction. They made up their minds the following day to leave the schools and to abandon the house in Paris. As they were preparing for the execution of their resolve, news of it reached the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice, who went immediately to see M. De La Salle and begged him to dissuade them from their project and prevent their leaving. At the same time, the Cardinal sent an order to the higher court not to pronounce the sentence of banishment, but to leave things as they were.

“From this time, M. De La Salle and his Brothers were left in peace for a considerable period. Nevertheless, during this interval, several interviews took place between M. De La Salle and some of his principal Brothers at the vicar general’s house, and also with several ecclesiastics sent by the vicar general or by the pastor of Saint-Sulpice to M. De La Salle’s residence, who spoke and conferred with each of the Brothers in private.

“Some eight or ten days after, on January 9th 1703, the vicar general and M. l’abbé Bricot came again to M. De La Salle’s house, caused the Brothers to be assem-

bled, made them a thousand promises, among others, that they could always keep their Rules, that M. De La Salle would not be taken from them, but that it would be necessary to obey and accept the said abbé for their superior, that they would always have the consolation of having M. De la Salle, and that the said abbé would come to the house only once a month. They accepted him on these conditions, or, at least, they did not resist as on the first occasion; and if it be true that "silence gives consent", then they consented to the election of this abbé, for not a single Brother objected.

"This is how things stand at present," adds the author on finishing his letter. "No one believes that this state of affairs can last, and it is to be hoped that it will have no serious consequences. A first step has been taken, and it seems that they want it to be maintained for some time; all that can be done is to make the best use of favourable opportunities to endeavour to undeceive His Eminence, and to commend the qualities of M. De La Salle. It is for this I have worked and I shall follow it up on every occasion that Providence will supply. I owe him this as a simple act of justice, and, moreover, the share that you take in it, urges me to work at it with increased zeal."

Here ends the touching narrative of the pastor of Villiers, a painful drama, in which we see the humility of John Baptist De La Salle contending with the invincible affection of his children; in this struggle which does such credit to the sons of the Saint, victory remained with the Brothers. M. Bricot was only a nominal superior, who, embarrassed by the *rôle* he was obliged to play in this matter, very soon withdrew entirely; the real direction was always in the hands of the founder.

But the unchained tempest was not to come to a sudden lull. It seemed as if this violent crisis had opened the door to all kinds of misfortunes, so much did they all seem to fall at the same time upon the victim marked out by Providence for suffering.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE IS OVERWHELMED
WITH TRIALS

1703

Scarcely had M. Bricot retired, when another nominal superior was forced on the community. He was received with honour, and no one showed him more respect than John Baptist. But he was an indiscreet man, who, on coming into the house, seemed to have no other purpose than to sow discord and reap ruin. Insidiously and by the most flattering promises, as well as by the most odious detraction against the person of John Baptist De La Salle, he strove to detach the Brothers from their real superior. His venomous discourses produced, at the outset, an effect quite contrary to his expectations; the more their father was calumniated, the dearer he became in their estimation, and the more they attached themselves to him. It is impossible to express the profound grief that these well-known intrigues caused to the heart of the Saint. Tired with these base practices, and fearing to be an obstacle to good even in his own house, he resolved to resign into the Cardinal's hands the power to hear confessions which he had received from him. By this voluntary resignation, he wished to abandon even the appearance of the supe-

riority that was so bitterly disputed. But the Cardinal would not consent, and made John Baptist understand that he should keep the government of the Institute.

Other crosses then came to him from the part of the Brothers, for the bad leaven could not fail fermenting in a few weak souls. Certain dissatisfied members, among whom were some who should have been the ramparts of the Institute, withdrew under conditions most painful to the heart of the superior, since they tried to defeat his work by means of rival schools, or by schools which he had already engaged to conduct. Brother Michel himself, who had been the director of the novices, and whose indiscreet ardour had lately compromised the Institute, deserted his master for a time; but he soon returned repentant, and, like the prodigal son, threw himself at his father's feet, and repaired his fault, in the schools of Chartres, by two years of work and by a courageous death.

No defection, however, was so embarrassing to John Baptist as that of the two Brothers of the Sunday school. They were particularly capable masters; for their superior had spared neither trouble nor expense to prepare them to teach the higher branches. When they had deserted their posts, the Saint begged an intelligent Brother to study mathematics and drawing, in order to continue the Sunday school. But the Brother excused himself, alleging as motive, that two Brothers had already lost themselves there, and that his conscience shrank from putting his vocation in peril and thereby his salvation. This Brother imparted the same feelings to the others, and all together drew up a Memorial on the dangers of higher studies.

In what an inextricable difficulty was John Baptist

going to find himself! On the one hand, he knew that M. De La Chétardye was greatly attached, and not without reason, to the Sunday school; to suppress it would be to incur the displeasure of the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice. On the other hand, the Brothers' refusal put him in the impossibility of continuing it. What better could he do than go and expose the situation to M. De La Chétardye? The pastor received him very coldly, and imputed to him the departure of the two masters and the resistance of the Brothers; he even accused him of being the author of the Memorial. And as the Saint defended himself, he went into a fit of uncontrolled impatience, so far as to treat him as a liar. M. De La Salle preserved his usual calmness and respectfully replied: "Sir, it is with this lie on my lips that I am just going to say Holy Mass." He gained by this humiliation; for a compassionate Brother, seeing him crushed under the burden of so many crosses, offered himself to study the specialities in question and thus the Sunday school was soon reopened. This institution was transferred to Charonne towards the end of 1703, and was closed soon after, in consequence of the attacks of the writing-masters.

But John Baptist was yet to drink a much more bitter cup, when the treachery of Nicolas Vuyart, about 1705, brought about the ruin of the long desired training school of Saint-Hippolyte.

Nicolas Vuyart, one of his two most cherished disciples, who was bound to the Institute by solemn engagements, betrayed his master for money, and, by his infidelity, destroyed the work for the country schoolmasters. In order to assure the existence and continuance of this important foundation, the pastor of

Saint-Hippolyte, feeling his end approach, had willed him his fortune, and did not hesitate to appoint Nicolas Vuyart as his legal heir, and so died without any anxiety for the future of the work.

What was not John Baptist's surprise, when, after the death of the parish priest, he came to make arrangements with Brother Vuyart, and found him completely changed! A few days had sufficed to fill the heart of the religious with cupidity. Blinded with avarice, Vuyart disowned his father, denied his superior, and haughtily answered that the money was his, and that he knew very well how to dispose of it according to the intentions of the donor. The Saint, with a heart deeply wounded, retired; he complained to no one; took no steps to recover the legacy of which he had such pressing need. What was the loss of the money to him, when compared with the defection of a son whom he loved so much, and the ruin of so important a work! For Nicolas Vuyart, no matter what he might do, being now no longer a Brother, could not possibly hold either the school or the training college of Saint-Hippolyte, against the attacks of the writing-masters. Later on, when remorse had seized the heart of the deluded man, the Saint, who loved him still, would have received him again with open arms, if he had not been deterred by wise and prudent counsel.

In this avalanche of trials, Heaven itself seemed to take part with the enemy, for death made many victims in the Institute. During the epidemic of purpura, which was prevalent at Chartres during the year 1705, five Brothers died in the exercise of their devotedness. However pure the victims of this sacrifice, John Baptist wept for them, both as father and superior: his

fatherly heart was wrung by the death of his children; the superior lacked labourers for many pressing works in hand.

Grand Maison

THE REGRET OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
FOR LEAVING THE GRAND'MAISON. —
HE FIXES HIS RESIDENCE IN THE FAUBOURG
SAINT-ANTOINE
1703-1704

In the midst of these overwhelming tribulations, John Baptist found an asylum within his own heart; as long as he was the tranquil possessor of the Grand'Maison, he and his Brothers were at liberty to give themselves up to the consoling exercises of prayer and mortification without fear of disturbance. But that pleasant retreat was not left to them long; they were obliged soon to leave it and lead a wandering and uncertain life.

The Brothers had already besought him to quit that place, in order to escape from the importunate visits of an official superior who came among them to sow discord and to spread a bad spirit. But the Saint was attached to that house, because it was spacious and commodious, and within easy distance of all the schools; perhaps he also loved it because it had been the theatre of his humiliations and of his bitterest griefs. However that may be, he did not wish to leave it, and he had ordered a daily procession to obtain the grace to be allowed to fix his abode in that cherished place.

He believed for a while that his desires had been

granted. For when the property was put up for sale, a very considerable sum of money had been willed to him for the purchase of the house and for the establishment of his novitiate. But secret intrigues diverted the legacy from its proper destination, and the Grand'-Maison passed into the hands of another purchaser. John Baptist vainly endeavoured to be allowed to remain at least as a tenant. This was conceded, but only for a term of six weeks, and on August 20th, he transferred his community to the rue de Charonne, in the faubourg Saint-Antoine.

The house in the rue de Charonne could be only a temporary refuge. It was large enough to accommodate the novitiate and even the Sunday school; but it was inconvenient, as it had not been designed and built for a community. As if he had a presentiment that he should soon be driven from his new home, the Saint made no arrangements for a chapel. With the priests who had followed him from the rue de Vaugirard, he went to say Mass in the convent of the " Sisters of the Cross ", fervent Dominicanesses, whose convent was just opposite his new home: and there, too, each morning, the novices assisted at the holy sacrifice. The nuns were soon struck with the piety and modesty of those young men, and the striking holiness that shone on their superior's countenance. Learning of their distress, they hastened to assist them; and the motherly solicitude of which they then gave such touching proofs, never flagged; for, afterwards, when John Baptist found himself in necessity, he had recourse to his benefactresses, saying: " Let us go to the Cross. " These pious nuns heartily desired his counsel on their interior, and even to confide to him the direction of their conscience. Despite

the repugnance he had to exercise a ministry foreign to his work, he accepted to pay in the spiritual order, the temporal service which he received from this community in his extreme necessities.

Moreover, his zeal was always in readiness for all kinds of devotedness, and often an act of charity, begun with the greatest simplicity, resulted in a deed of true heroism. One day, he was called to hear a priest's confession; this poor man had been condemned to the Bastille for some political offence; he was in a most unfortunate and lamentable condition, just as wretched from a physical point of view as he was morally discouraged; a ragged soutane barely covered a shirt that was all torn and black with disgusting vermin. Moved even to tears at so heartrending a sight, John Baptist embraced the poor prisoner. Then, having closed, with fraternal compassion, the gaping wounds of his soul, by means of the sacrament of penance, he resolved to relieve his body also. He immediately changed clothes with the prisoner; and he who was so delicate, clad himself in these rotten and vermin-covered rags, and in this state left the prison, hiding from view the joy he felt at having alleviated a suffering member of Jesus Christ.

These acts of charity scarcely encroached on the time required by the duties of his state; for, at the rue de Charonne as elsewhere, he husbanded his time and strength in view of his community. Though the house was far enough from the faubourg Saint-Germain, yet the Brothers of the schools of Saint-Sulpice came every Thursday and Sunday to rest their wearied bodies, and to invigorate their piety and religious spirit in his presence; he received them with paternal kindness, and

thanked God for the fervour that still reigned in his Institute, notwithstanding all the obstacles it had to encounter. Besides the novitiate and the Sunday school, he had to open a gratuitous school for the poor children of the faubourg Saint-Antoine; by a creation so conformable to his vocation, he had besides, the advantage of gaining the good will of the parish priest of Saint-Paul's, who was then justly preoccupied with the Christian education of his parish.

What the Saint relished above all, in the midst of these apostolic occupations, was the solitude of the place. At the rue de Charonne, he lived as in a land of exile, far from intercourse with the world and the tumult of the large city. Doubtless, calumnies did not cease to pursue his memory, because his quitting the Grand'Maison had provoked the most wicked interpretations; but all these rumours had vanished before reaching the rue de Charonne. For several months he enjoyed absolute silence so dear to him, and he profited thereby to give more time to mental prayer. But after that short repose sent him by Providence, fresh storms, roused by the schoolmasters, burst forth to trouble and disperse the community of the faubourg Saint-Antoine.

VIOLENT PERSECUTION BY THE SCHOOLMASTERS AND WRITING-MASTERS

1704-1706

From the moment of his arrival in Paris, John Baptist De La Salle came into collision with the powerful corporation of schoolmasters, whose jealousy had armed itself with specious pretexts. As a rule, the gratuitous schools received none but poor children. So rare and

so badly managed were such schools in Paris, that those children who were not altogether indigent frequented the pay-schools and paid the fees. But as soon as the Brothers appeared and the gratuitous schools multiplied, and, above all, when it was seen that they were irreproachable and even superior to the pay-schools, many poor families who till then had made heavy sacrifices for the instruction of their children, hastened to confide them to the Brothers, and profited doubly by doing so. From that sprang the complaints of the schoolmasters and of the writing-masters, two rival and powerful corporations, by whose united efforts it was thought the work that they feared would be crushed out of existence.

In 1690, after the opening of a school in the rue du Bac, the masters of the "*petites écoles*" laid their complaints before the precentor of Notre-Dame, their head superior : we have already shown how the provincial Parliament had quashed the precentor's judgment. In 1699, seeing that the schools continued to multiply, they renewed their attacks, and furiously rushed upon the school of the rue Saint-Placide, determined to avenge themselves. Just as they were seizing and throwing into the street the furniture of the classes and the objects for the use of the masters and pupils, John Baptist presented himself before these furious vandals and calmly said to them : " Here, take me also. " The invaders, assuming a feigned air of cordiality in his regard, replied : " We wish no harm to you, but to your Brothers. " They forgot that by attacking the Brothers they were attacking their chief also. The precentor, before whom the Brothers were accused of receiving school fees from families in easy circumstances, con-

demned them. But when the case came before the Parliament, M. De La Chétardye defended them before the magistrates; it was he that had been assailed in his right to educate the children of the poor in his schools. As the debated question appeared to him to be of the greatest importance, he did not fear to call to his assistance the powerful influence of Madame De Maintenon, who wrote a significant note to the President De Harlay on the subject. Besides, the justice of John Baptist's case would have sufficed to gain the victory for him, because he defied his adversaries to prove that the Brothers had ever accepted school fees, offering to close all his schools, if his rivals succeeded in showing that they were not absolutely gratuitous schools. Unable to accept this proud challenge thrown down by charity, the accusing masters withdrew, crestfallen and nonsuited.

The intervention of the pastor of Saint-Sulpice, on this occasion, had been all-powerful. Checked by his authority, the schoolmasters did not attempt to annoy the Brothers again for several years. But in 1704, when John Baptist De La Salle had transferred his novitiate and had opened a school in the rue de Charonne, and when it was evident that the pastor of Saint-Sulpice, whose enthusiasm seemed to have cooled, had no longer the same interest to protect the gratuitous schools, they reopened fire. The corporation of the writing-masters, more noisy and violent than that of the schoolmasters, was the first to enter the field, and soon both acted together. That M. De La Chétardye might not again interfere in their quarrel, they attacked only the schools of the rue de Charonne and Saint-Hippolyte: the day schools, the Sunday school and the masters' training

school, which they denounced to the authorities as so many encroachments, and demanded their immediate suppression.

On February 7th 1704, at the petition of the writing-masters' agent, a seizure was made in the rue de Charonne, of all the objects used for writing, — copybooks, pens, models, etc., and the Brothers received orders to appear before the police-court of the Châtelet. Instead of presenting his defence, John Baptist permitted himself to be condemned by default on February 22nd following. The judgment was that all the writing objects that had been seized should be confiscated, and that the Brothers be condemned to pay a fine of fifty *livres*; at the same time it ordained that “ only those pupils whose fathers were really poor should be admitted in the charity schools, and that they should be taught only such subjects as suited the profession of their parents.”

John Baptist De La Salle, who had done nothing contrary to his right, did not feel himself bound by the terms of this judgment; consequently, he told the Brothers to continue their classes, and he did not pay the fine. This noncompliance with the law brought on a new suit, and a fresh condemnation, more severe than the former, which ran as follows: “ The Brothers of the charity schools are forbidden to live together, or to unite for any business until they shall have obtained permission by letters patent from the King, and shall have had them registered; all this under pain of a fine of three hundred *livres*.” This judgment, aimed against all the Brothers' schools, was to be posted up “ at the entrances of the said schools and wherever necessary.”

This severe judgment, though posted up in all the thoroughfares of Paris, was not enforced with the same

rigour everywhere. The parish priests of Saint-Sulpice and Saint-Hippolyte maintained the Brothers for the direction of their schools, and their right was, for a time, respected. But, at the rue de Charonne, the classes were literally pillaged by the public officers : the forms, the desks, the books, the writing materials, and the drawing models, were all carried off; and even the signboard of the school was pulled down. The indignation of the people, who could not understand what this brigandage meant, did not stop them in their plunder; the complaints of the poor who were directly affected in the persecution of their teachers, were not listened to. Might triumphed : the charity school and the Sunday school were closed, and the superior and his Brothers were thrown into the street.

After the devastation of his school, John Baptist had nothing to do but to retire from the faubourg Saint-Antoine. He got his furniture secretly removed into a shed that was offered to him by a compassionate person, and, without any disturbance, withdrew with his novices to the Brothers' house in the rue Princesse.

But even here, he did not find absolute security; for he feared both the displeasure of the pastor of Saint-Sulpice, and that the animosity of the schoolmasters might be excited anew. So, when the parish priest of Saint-Roch offered him to open a gratuitous school in his parish, at the beginning of 1705, he eagerly profited by the opportunity to retire, in order that the Brothers might be delivered from the annoyances that his presence might draw upon them. He resided three years at the community of Saint-Roch, rue Saint-Honoré, near the celebrated convent of the Jacobins.

His going away did not save the Brothers of the rue

Princesse. For, during the year 1705, the schoolmasters and the writing-masters did not cease to trouble them with their visits, and to worry them with their reproaches. They shamelessly entered their classes, inspected the lists of the pupils, closely scanned the children to ascertain if they were all really poor, and caused disgraceful and violent scenes, if they found a pupil that was well enough off to frequent the pay-schools. On August 4th 1705, the whole school was sacked; the furniture was seized, and would have been carried away, if the proprietor had not interfered, and declared himself the guardian of the furniture. Until about the middle of the year 1706, the Brothers were not left a moment in peace; it was only a time of seizures and insolence on the part of the lay masters, and of humiliating condemnations on the part of the Parliament, that sustained the ambitious pretensions of the enemies of the Brothers.

At last, having lost patience and courage, the Brothers resolved to give up the unequal struggle and leave the place free. They, therefore, besought their superior to recall them from the schools of Saint-Sulpice, and to send them to new foundations. For, the parish of Saint-Sulpice was not the boundary of the Institute; the large expansion which it had already attained, gave the Brothers hope that he would be able to find shelter for them elsewhere, and that they would be protected from the incursions of their rivals as well as from the annoying protection of the pastor of Saint-Sulpice. After having sought the advice of prudent men, John Baptist complied with their desires and assigned them occupations in the schools outside the capital, in the month of July 1706.

Then were heard loud complaints among the poor of the faubourg Saint-Germain : their teachers gone, what was to become of them ? An effort was made, but all to no purpose, to find new masters for the poor schools; those who presented themselves, being but former Brothers unfaithful to their vocation, it was at once seen that these cast-off members of the Institute would be both a dishonour and an expense for the charity schools. So negotiations were undertaken to have the Brothers return. John Baptist replied to M. De La Chétardye's advances with a condescension worthy of his great heart; for, he asked only that efficacious measures should be taken to assure tranquillity for his schools in the future.

Certainly, this condition was not onerous. In order to fulfil it, M. De La Chétardye made a sort of compromise with the lay masters : these latter engaged to leave the Brothers in the peaceful exercise of their functions; the pastor of Saint-Sulpice promised that he would not admit into the parish schools any but children known to be really poor, and provided with a certificate testifying that they were indigent. In this way was terminated, at least in Paris, that hot contest between earthly interests, said to have been injured, and the aspirations of zeal that sought only the happiness of peaceable devotedness. These rivalries must not be regarded as preludes to the combats between secular and religious education, because, at that epoch, all teachers equally desired to form Christian children. And yet, if the war declared in our days with regard to education seems to be limited to the religious question, would it not be easy to find behind this question the same interests and the same appetites ?

CHAPTER VII.

THE ESTABLISHMENT AT ROUEN AND DIVERS SCHOOLS

1705-1712

THE SCHOOLS OF DARNÉTAL AND ROUEN

1705-1707

The persecutions, open or hidden, which the community of Paris suffered, did not stop the development of the schools elsewhere. For it was during the severest stage of the storm raised by the lay masters, and at the very time that John Baptist was forced to leave the rue de Charonne and felt that his presence compromised the Brothers of Saint-Sulpice, that overtures were made to him in view of opening a school at Rouen.

The first proposal came from M. Des Hayes, parish priest of Saint-Sauveur at Rouen, a former companion of Saint-Sulpice. He was asked to send two Brothers to direct a school at Darnétal, a populous industrial district situated at the gates of Rouen.

The material conditions were very moderate, for only one hundred and fifty *livres* were offered as the salary of the two Brothers; but, said the Saint, "we shall easily agree; you know we are not exacting." Though he was disinterested in money matters, yet he was very tenacious of the preservation of the Rules of the Institute. There must be at least two Brothers in a school, because, said he, "You know we could not send a Brother alone." The Brothers are to be the masters of the schools, but neither singers nor sacristans; he desires to be informed if they shall be obliged "to sing and assist the pastor in his functions": for "you know very well", added he, "that our Brothers do neither the one nor the other."

The school of Darnétal which was opened in the beginning of February 1705, soon attracted attention; it brought about the transformation of the poor children of the village so promptly, that the citizens of Rouen very strongly expressed their desire of participating in the like advantages. This was just what John Baptist De La Salle wanted. A secret instinct urged him towards Rouen, whence his vocation came. He hoped to continue there the work of Madame Maillefer, of Father Barré, and of Adrian Nyel, and the charity schools of Rouen seemed to call him. He would follow the Brothers there, and would no longer be troublesome to his numerous adversaries in Paris; he would transfer his novitiate to a more hospitable region.

These plans were realized about the end of March 1705, when the charity commissioners of Rouen, at the request of the vicars general, Archbishop Colbert, and of the first President Camus De Pontcarré, agreed that the Brothers might come from Paris to take charge of

the charity schools of the city. It is true that the commissioners proceeded very slowly and almost with distrust : they desired only two Brothers to make a beginning ; these two Brothers, lodged and boarded in the hospital, should, when not in class, be employed in the service of the paupers ; they were to be paid thirty-six *livres* each, to keep themselves in clothing. John Baptist accepted these conditions, however onerous ; he was but too happy to enter Rouen even at this price.

He left Paris in the month of May 1705 with the two Brothers who were to direct the school. Their journey was made on foot, and was a kind of retreat ; all the exercises of piety were made at the hours marked by the daily regulations ; silence was observed except during the vocal prayers and the exhortations of the Saint. They went indeed on their mission as sent of God.

Their efforts were so blessed by Heaven, they established such order in the schools of Saint-Godard and Saint-Maclou, that they completely won the confidence of the commissioners ; in consequence of which, two more Brothers were asked for the schools of Saint-Maclou and Saint-Eloi. The inhabitants, on their part, openly testified their approbation of the new masters ; the three hundred and fifty pupils, who soon were in attendance at the Brothers' schools, were an evident proof of the parents' esteem. This success aroused the jealousy of the writing-masters to such a point, that they laid their complaints before the charity commissioners, and in order to pacify them, it was decreed that no child not having a certificate of indigency, should be admitted to the Brothers' schools. John Baptist De La Salle did not think that he should protest

against this order, though it was quite contrary to the idea he had of his work : he desired that the Brothers should everywhere keep gratuitous schools, so that everywhere the children of the poor might receive a Christian education; it never entered his mind to refuse admittance to the children of well to do parents, and much less to examine into the social standing of the pupils. Sooner or later, his idea was to triumph over the sordid preoccupations of interest.

Notwithstanding the means taken to satisfy the jealousy and demands of the writing-masters, the work of the classes weighed heavily on the four Brothers. These humble religious were subjected to unheard-of hardship, acting at the same time as hospital nurses and as teachers of the schools. In the morning, they had to preside at the rising of the poor of the hospital, to assist them and get them to say their prayers. At eight o'clock, they went to their respective schools to instruct the poor children of the city. When they returned at noon, their first duty was to wait on the old men; the meal of the poor being finished, they took their repast quickly so as to be at school in good time in the midst of their scholars. They returned from their schools only at six o'clock in the evening, and their first work was to help the poor to their supper, instruct them and get them to say their night prayers.

Such a daily regulation, which seemed to make no account of the limit of human endurance, could not possibly be followed without seriously affecting the health of the Brothers, and notably prejudicing their religious fervour. True, the former masters had been subjected to the same work; but they lightened its weight by neglecting the work of the schools. The

Brothers whose zeal was equally divided between the care of the paupers and the instruction of the children, could not support such a task very long. Several sank under the burden. At the end of two years, being unable to hold out any longer, they drew up a Memorial on the necessity of withdrawing from the charity commissioners' employment, where their virtue risked as much as their health.

John Baptist De La Salle, who was much alarmed at the situation, and who regretted to see his disciples subjected to, and even overcome by so much hardship, and above all, their being deprived of the fortifying assistance of community exercises, proposed an arrangement to the commissioners that would enable the Brothers to live according to their Rules and in their own house. He offered to keep the four charity schools of the city and that of the hospital by putting two Brothers in each of them. As to the salary, he would leave that to the generosity of the commissioners. Could he have made a more disinterested offer?

The commissioners accepted this exceptional opportunity at their meeting of August 7th 1707; but, taking advantage of the condescension of the Servant of God, they allowed a sum of only six hundred *livres* a year, as the salary of the ten Brothers. This sum was contemptible, seeing that John Baptist generally asked three hundred *livres* for each master, not including house accommodation. When he would have paid three hundred and ten *livres* as the rent of a house, there would remain for the support and clothing of the Brothers only an insignificant sum, so that he himself would be obliged to bear nearly the whole of the expense.

In return for his charity, abusive language was less spared than money. Especially in the beginning, the patience of the Brothers was put to the severest tests. The people in the streets, astonished at the singularity of their dress, insulted them in a thousand ways, and the better class contemplated with malicious pleasure the bad treatment that these humble religious had to bear. John Baptist De La Salle shared the humiliations of his Brothers; but, instead of complaining, he rather rejoiced to gain, even at this price, the blessings of heaven, which he expected for his work in Rouen. He was not deceived in his expectations; for, sympathy and even veneration succeeded the bad treatment, and Saint-Yon was to become at Rouen, an active centre of life and development for his Institute.

SAINT-YON : NOVITIATE, BOARDING SCHOOL,
REFORMATORY
1705-1709

In the month of May 1705, John Baptist De La Salle proposed to the Archbishop and to the first President his plan of establishing his novitiate at Rouen. His novitiate was crumbling in Paris; during two years it had wandered from one house to another; with very great difficulty could it find that recollection or the recruitment which it needed.

M. Colbert and M. De Pontcarré cheerfully accepted this proposal, and even engaged to defray all the expenses of the transfer. The Archbishop at once pointed out the house of Saint-Yon, in the faubourg Saint-Sever of

Rouen, as the most convenient for a novitiate and to become the mother-house of an Institute. It was a manor house, surrounded with a park of about seventeen acres. This district of Saint-Sever which is to-day so populous, was at that time a very quiet place; the large number of religious houses in the immediate vicinity of the property helped to maintain that silence so congenial to meditation.

As soon as the house was hired, John Baptist brought his novices to it. All was executed so promptly, that the community had already been established at Rouen, before his departure was known in Paris; in the face of an accomplished fact, opposition, if there was any, found itself disarmed.

There were only six novices, so unfavourable had the circumstances been for recruiting; but, in the year after the arrival at Saint-Yon, more than twenty subjects presented themselves, and thus, the Saint was rewarded for so many trials, patiently borne. Brother Barthélemy, the novice master, a very pious and clever man, was destined to be the pillar of the Institute. He entered the Institute in February 1703, after having victoriously triumphed over very painful interior difficulties; he soon gained the full confidence of his superior, and became his right-hand man until he succeeded him.

John Baptist, however, carefully watched over the life of his novitiate. When he was not detained by business in Paris, he would come and shut himself up with the novices in the solitude of Saint-Yon. This retreat pleased him, because, therein, he could indulge his taste for mental prayer. No importunate visitor came to disturb him; the only person that was admitted

was the president, De Pontcarré, friend and protector of the Institute, who loved to come there to be separated from the din of the outside world.

In the month of September 1705, all the Brothers of the Society were called to Saint-Yon, and thus the retreats in common, which had already done so much good at Vaugirard and at the Grand'Maison, were re-established to preserve fervour in the communities. The Saint introduced at this time the custom of making the afternoon meditation on "the school duties", and the instructions that he gave on this subject have been condensed in the precious book entitled "*Meditations for the time of the retreat, for the use of all persons employed in the education of youth, and particularly for the retreats which the Brothers of the Christian Schools make during the vacation.*" This book is not a guide on pedagogy like the *School Management*, but a manual of apostleship, in which the author teaches his disciples, whom he calls "the co-operators with Jesus Christ" and "the guardian angels of youth," the art of exercising a moral ascendancy over the children to make them good Christians.

The Brothers' docility to these lessons produced perfect masters. From the confidence which they inspired as educators sprang three new works at Saint-Yon.

The first began in the end of 1705, at the earnest request of the merchants and manufacturers of Rouen. There was not at that time any kind of education suitable to the wants of the middle classes. The nobility and rich citizens could choose from among hundreds of flourishing colleges; for the labouring classes, there were numerous schools, either paying or gratuitous; but the middle classes, for whom primary education

was not sufficient and classical studies only a useless luxury, called for an intermediate education in which practical instruction should predominate. For this purpose, certain families of Rouen in easy circumstances petitioned John Baptist to take their sons as boarders, and to give them a training to suit their condition.

Without neglecting his principal work of the popular schools, the Saint heartily welcomed this appeal to his zeal, thus giving another proof of the broadmindedness with which he regarded his vocation, and of the elasticity with which he accommodated his idea of education to the wants of the times and to the expressed wishes of the parents. Neither did he despise the material advantages that would accrue to him from a boarding school; for, with the income derived from Saint-Yon, he would be enabled to support the miserably paid masters of the gratuitous schools.

A boarding school was therefore opened at Saint-Yon; the children of the middle classes flocked to it, and, according to a biographer, pupils came from all parts of the country. From the very beginning, John Baptist drew up very wise regulations, the spirit of which, in spite of the thousand variations of time and place, still continues to govern the boarding schools of the Brothers. Religion occupies the place of honour; it is taught by the lessons of catechism carefully given, and practised in the various exercises of piety in which the pupils make it a point of honour to take part. It trains them to virtue; for the founder desires that the children should be "educated and trained to innocence;" hence the exact supervision which preserves the pupils from all moral danger. But profane instruction was not at

all neglected. An ancient catalogue of Rouen summarizes the programme in the following terms : " All that concerns commerce, finance, the army, architecture, and mathematics, in a word, all that a young man may learn, with the exception of Latin, is taught at Saint-Yon. " This wise organization caused Victor Duruy to say in an official report of March 2nd 1867 : " From this first essay sprang an education which, if it had been made general, would have advanced by a century the organization of adult schools and also that of special secondary education. "

Alongside of the boarding school, which served as model for so many others in the XVIIIth century, more turbulent colonies came to establish themselves within the walls of Saint-Yon. The Brothers exercised such an ascendancy over unmanageable characters, that ungovernable youths, and wayward, incorrigible children were confided to them. For these classes Saint-Yon was a house of correction, and they were often returned to their parents quite converted and changed.

After some time, M. De Pontcarré asked the Brothers to receive young criminals condemned to prison, because he looked on the prison as an immoral place for them on account of their being brought into contact with old offenders, and also because of the absence of all moralizing influences. With the simplicity that was worthy of his great faith, John Baptist followed all these providential indications and placed at the service of these several enterprises the most disinterested devotedness.

It is true that he did not escape criticism in all these works. About the year 1708, there was a movement of opinion against Saint-Yon : the Brothers were represented as incapable masters, and prejudicial to those of the

teaching profession; they were accused of poorly feeding the boarders, though paid large fees. M. De Pontcarré, hearing these accusations, did not think that they should be allowed to pass unanswerd; he invited the governor of the city to go with him to Saint-Yon, personally to satisfy himself with the actual state of affairs. The result of the inquiry was of course in the Brothers' favour, and the first president said to the governor: "Well, Sir, did I not tell you that you would go away much more satisfied than you came?"

THE OPENING OF SCHOOLS OUTSIDE OF THE CAPITAL 1705-1711

While John Baptist De La Salle was dividing his time between Paris and Rouen, he did not neglect the foundations that had been already made, or discontinue to open new schools. The years that immediately followed the opening of the schools in Darnétal and Rouen were the most prosperous of his life; for, in six years, Brothers had been sent to twelve different towns. We shall not conduct the reader through the history of each of these foundations: it will suffice to mention them. In 1705, Dijon and Marseilles; 1707, Valréas (Comtat-Venaissin), Mende, Alais and Grenoble; 1708, Saint-Denis, school and masters' training college; 1709, Mâcon; 1710, Versailles, Boulogne-sur-Mer and Moulins; 1711, les Vans (Ardèche).

All these schools were the offspring of the same Christian inspiration, and all, in their development, passed through nearly the same phases.

The great movement of Christian charity that sprang up in the XVIIIth century stirred in the hearts of generous souls compassion for all kinds of sufferings. Poor, abandoned children, given over to ignorance and vice, roused heartfelt sympathy and stimulated a spirit of burning, apostolic zeal in many breasts. Everywhere, but especially in the towns and cities, the instruction and moralization of the poor occupied the public mind; gratuitous schools rose to admit them. It was the great preoccupation of the Bishops also.

At Mende, for example, the Bishop exhorted his priests "to provide good masters for the schools;" and as a proof of his zeal for his episcopal city, he left a sum of money the interest of which would suffice to endow two charity schools, one for boys, and one for girls.

Marseilles already possessed three gratuitous schools; but there was a district of the parish of Saint-Laurent, where the poor were totally abandoned. This district was wholly inhabited by sailors whose children went to sea at nine or ten years of age; at a maturer age, they were unable, on account of their lack of education, to obtain suitable employment. These poor youths, having grown up in ignorance, remained lawless and incorrigible subjects; and, having received neither a moral nor a religious education, they wallowed in disorder, and they often apostatized in the Mussulman countries which they visited. To receive and form these children, a charity school was opened at the expense of the Christian families in the quarter occupied by sailors.

In the diocese of Alais, where heresy had implanted itself by means of schools, the Bishop was convinced

that nothing but the schools would finally triumph over Calvinism. He ordered the following note to be written to John Baptist De La Salle : “ There is question of destroying heresy in this country, and of establishing the Catholic religion ; the work is great, good workmen are required... I assure you that we have more need of good schoolmasters than of any other kind of workers. ”

Zeal for the poor has always developed the spirit of sacrifice ; as the schools must be gratuitous, the teachers must be cared for by voluntary contributions. In one place foundations, in another voluntary subscriptions assure a respectable subsistence for the teachers. At Vans, the abbé Du Roure, seigneur de Saint-Jean, willed his fortune for the establishing of gratuitous schools, and he respectfully asked the Bishop of Uzès and his successors to protect the foundation, “ so useful and necessary for the well-being of the Catholic religion and for the public good of the said town of Vans, the needs of which were so pressing on account of the state in which it was with regard to religion. ” The schools of Grenoble and Marseilles were assisted by subscriptions : at Marseilles, the most prominent men of the city subscribed ten *livres* each yearly ; at Grenoble, the subscriptions varied from twenty to fifty *livres*, according to the subscribers' means. If the revenues from charitable sources were not always equal to the wants of the schools, there was no hesitation in stirring up zeal by means of an extraordinary appeal ; at Dijon, for example, a touching letter, signed by the poor of the town, had just prompted the generosity of the rich : “ You are ”, said they to them, “ our resource and our aid in the benefit that you wish to procure for us in perpetuity, but which

will certainly fail us unless your charitable hands come to sustain it. ”

For these religious undertakings, it was more difficult to find masters than money. The ecclesiastics themselves often took charge of them, at other times they were confided to pious laymen. In neither case was the stability guaranteed, and it was felt that the charity schools were in a precarious condition for want of special institutions that could take over the responsibility once for all. For this reason, the Institute of the Brothers was in such demand as soon as it became known; for its mission was precisely to provide masters for charity schools.

At Moulins, a truly apostolic priest, Louis Aubery, had opened a gratuitous school in 1682; he himself taught it during fifteen years; then he united with some clerics; but he felt uneasy for the future of his work, which he saw to be very uncertain notwithstanding his resources; a journey to Paris brought him into contact with the founder of the Brothers. He exposed his trouble regarding his school, and as soon as he was assured of always having religious masters, he began to feel at ease about the continuance of his work.

The Bishop of Mende, when beginning his charity schools, announced with great pleasure that the masters would be “ those that were trained in Paris for the instruction and education of youth; they are ”, added he, “ the most famous in the kingdom, and with whom young people make the greatest progress in virtue. ”

A former companion of Saint-Sulpice wrote from Alais to John Baptist De La Salle : “ I have learned that you have resigned your canonicate and devote yourself to all sorts of good works, among others, to that of forming a

community of schoolmasters, who have already done much good wherever they have been established. We are in need of such teachers in these parts, where we have great trouble in finding Catholics to whom we can intrust the education of our youths. ”

The Brothers, when once in charge of a school, everywhere gained the approval of the population : the children crowded their classes; the prominent men rejoiced at the moral good that was effected; the work increased, and additional masters were required for these new necessities. “ We have here”, wrote the Bishop of Alais to the superior, “ your Brothers as schoolmasters with whom we are very much pleased; this makes me desire to have several others for our towns of the Cevennes and other large districts. If I had thirty, I could find employment for them all... I am doing my best for them, and I shall continue to do so; they are doing an immense good. ” The Bishop of Mende wrote : “ No one could be more pleased than I with the Brother you sent me... I shall be much obliged to you if you will send him a good companion, who will be competent to teach writing and arithmetic; because by this means we shall attract all the youths, and so be able to impart to them the first principles of Christian piety. ”

So many new foundations were not begun and did not prosper without difficulties and trials. Sometimes it was necessary to reckon with the lowest possible resources, and the masters were often reduced to a degree of poverty bordering on privation; at other times they were subjected, as at Vans and Alais, to the attacks of the irritated Huguenots. And, at times, even the religious authority, by meddling with the

direction of the Brothers, almost paralysed the central administration. It was so at Versailles; the parish priest of Saint-Louis, insisting on keeping a Brother whose fervour had relaxed, was thus the involuntary cause of the loss of a vocation, and nearly brought destruction on the school itself.

But the prudent founder watched with such unremitting solicitude over his flock, that he assured the prosperity of his schools by the exact fidelity of all the masters to their community exercises.

THE FAMINE OF 1709 — RETURN
OF THE NOVITIATE TO PARIS

1709

When John Baptist De La Salle began the foundation at Rouen, in 1705, he had taken up his residence in the parish of Saint-Roch, Paris. Whenever his business called him neither to Rouen nor to Champagne, it was there he lived during the three following years. But, in 1708, a difference having arisen with the clergy of Saint-Roch, who asked certain services of the Brothers which the founder judged incompatible with the Rules of the Institute, John Baptist abandoned the school, and retired with his Brothers, who had charge of it, to the house that had been lately opened, near the Sèvres Gate.

This house, situated in the rue de la Barouillère, had been hired the preceding year by M. De La Chétardye, to lodge all the Brothers that were teaching in the several schools of Saint-Sulpice. Till then, these Broth-

ers had lived in the schoolhouse in the rue Princesse ; but their health declined for want of air, and the noise of so populous a quarter was a great obstacle to the religious life. Their new residence, only a quarter of an hour from the schools, was a large property, well aired, isolated, favorable to recollection and large enough to receive, in case of necessity, all the Brothers for the annual retreat.

It was well seen, during the famine of 1709, that this house had been prepared by Providence in view of the future. The calamities that then weighed heavily on France were keenly felt in the different communities of the Brothers ; for these humble religious, having scarcely enough to live upon in ordinary times, suffered all the privations of hunger during the dearth. John Baptist made the greatest efforts to lessen in his communities the sad consequences of the public misery ; with very limited resources, he succeeded in saving their lives at least, and their schools were not interrupted.

In no other part of the country was the distress so poignant as at Rouen. The schoolmasters received but a pitiful salary. Saint-Yon, which supported them in ordinary times, could now give no help ; benefactors fell off, and the humble superior became a beggar for his Brothers, and often experienced painful refusals even in the most opulent houses ; in fine, the Archbishop, M. D'Aubigné, who had recently succeeded M. Colbert, and who had shown himself so compassionate for the poor of the city, failed in sympathy for the Brothers, believing he had done enough for them by tolerating them in the diocese. Under these most painful circumstances, John Baptist left the Brothers in their classes, but transferred his novitiate to Paris.

He thus largely augmented the Paris community which now counted nearly forty members ; but he hoped that Providence would raise up devoted benefactors. In fact, Madame De Maintenon, Madame Des Voisins, the Sisters of the Cross, Cardinal D'Estrées, and other friends, answered his expectation.

This assistance, however, did not suffice for all the needs; and there was great suffering at the Sèvres Gate. The Brothers were huddled together rather than lodged; for beds, they had only miserable straw mattresses, stretched on the floor; they were badly protected against the rigorous cold by their poor bedclothes. As to the nourishment, we know what that was from one of the Saint's letters: "Here we eat brown bread. The Brothers receive two ounces at breakfast and five at dinner. I cannot send you any pictures; I have not wherewith to buy bread for the forty persons that are here."

By a miracle of Providence, the Institute passed through the famine of 1709, not, indeed, without suffering, but yet no one died, and, wonderful to say, they did not go into debt. The Saint used to recall this period with a certain air of triumph: "Who were poorer than you", said he to the Brothers, some time after, "and who found more assistance in their poverty than you did? How many wretchedly poor people appeared to be forgotten by Providence, while it seemed to care only for you? Several communities, rich or fairly so, were ruined or incurred heavy debts. Behold how you have been treated during this trying period. If you have nothing, neither do you owe anything; and what is more wonderful still, your numbers have increased during these unfortunate times." Never, not even when the famine was at its worst, did he refuse to receive a

postulant, thus showing his absolute confidence in the protection of God. Some of the subjects that entered at this time, persevered ; but others left. And, when it was said, that perhaps hunger had been their only vocation, he was content with saying : “ They made a good retreat, which will be useful for their salvation. ”

No sooner was the Paris community delivered from the hardships of the famine, than it almost succumbed to assaults more frightful than the famine itself.

The Brothers' health had suffered so much from privation, that an epidemic of scurvy broke out among them, and several of the principal Brothers were attacked by it. The loss of these Brothers would have led to the complete disorganization of the schools. Under these circumstances, John Baptist's charity displayed the greatest activity: he isolated the sick Brothers and intrusted them to a specialist, who, touched by the fervour and the poverty of the Brothers, gratuitously lavished upon them his most assiduous care and attention. Health was regained by dint of prayers and remedies.

But now there burst out among the Brothers a violent crisis of bad spirit. Its principal cause was the relaxation that had been introduced into the Paris community during the long absences that the Rouen foundation had imposed on the superior ; for, when he returned, it was found very hard to induce them to resume the regularity and the practices of mortification to which he held with so much reason : it was nature resisting grace. However, the Brothers would have been very docile, if the revolt had not been stirred up from without. They were told that it was not just that the money paid to the school Brothers should be used to support the

novices also : if this were not done, they would be in fairly good circumstances, but with the charge of supporting the novitiate, they would be reduced to extreme want, prejudicial to their health. Besides, why should not the Brothers of Saint-Sulpice form themselves into a separate community and be self-governed? Why remain under the government of a superior, a stranger to the clergy of the parish? It was, as we see, a conspiracy to cause a schism in the Institute.

A daring and restless individual offered himself to facilitate its execution, and he worked hard to gain accomplices. His first attempts had some success, when one of the Brothers, struck with remorse, exposed the secret before the whole community, and accused himself of having promised to aid an enterprise that had for end to overthrow the superior's power and authority. The Brothers present were horror-struck by this revelation. What amazement for those who had heard nothing of the plot! What confusion for those implicated in the affair! They all then saw to what excesses relaxation would lead them. The most guilty had to leave the house; and, thanks to the happy reaction produced by repentance, all the other Brothers courageously resumed their fervent state of life. With the calm and paternal goodness with which he acted on this occasion, John Baptist drew the hearts of his children to him more closely than ever. God permitted that the bonds of the community should be all the more strengthened by the very shock that had almost broken them.

A TRAINING SCHOOL FOR MASTERS AT SAINT-DENIS. —

THE CLEMENT LAWSUIT

1707-1712

Though John Baptist De La Salle was almost overwhelmed with these internal difficulties, yet he lent a hand to a foundation that was to end in a most humiliating catastrophe : we allude to the Training School for country schoolmasters opened at Saint-Denis, and of the shameful lawsuit that it caused.

While always attending with the greatest care to his novitiate of the Brothers, the Saint never lost sight of the project for training lay masters for country schools. Since the failure of the Training School of Saint-Hippolyte, through Nicolas Vuyart's infidelity, he projected another. He kept in reserve for this undertaking, an important sum of money which the needs of the Institute enabled him to save. It seemed to him, in the spring of 1707, that Providence offered him the occasion to realize his plan.

He was, about this time, visited by a young cleric, named Clement, the son of a celebrated surgeon of Paris. Of an ardent temperament and impetuous zeal, exceedingly anxious to found a new work, Clement came to ask John Baptist for two Brothers, in order to establish a school for apprentices, in which boys from the age of seven to twenty should be instructed in some trade. Like a prudent man who did not wish either to discountenance the undertaking or incur any risks, the Saint answered that he would willingly aid this work,

but only in so far as it would contribute to the object of his Institute. After many interviews, Clement modified his plan so as to carry out the views of John Baptist and his own at the same time: he resolved to open, in the same house, a school for masters and a school for apprentices. The project was all the more advantageous, since the masters would have at hand a practising school.

However, John Baptist seemed in no hurry; he temporized for more than a year, before complying with Clement's wishes. He wanted to assure himself of this young man's constancy, to obtain the Archbishop's approval, and to study the material conditions for the execution of the work. After eighteen months' reflection, on October 23rd 1708, he signed the contract which engaged him in the foundation. By this contract, young Clement agreed to purchase for thirteen thousand *livres*, a house, situated at Saint-Denis. The deed was passed in the name of Rogier, an intimate friend of John Baptist, who had joined with many others to ask him to accept Clement's offer. John Baptist paid down the five thousand two hundred *livres* that were required as the first payment; but Clement, the real purchaser of the house, signed the receipt for the sum advanced.

As soon as the house was arranged, in the spring of 1709, the Brothers took possession of it; some young men immediately presented themselves to learn the art of becoming good schoolmasters. Organized like those of Rheims and Saint-Hippolyte, the new school went on well and promised good results: the Cardinal expressed his satisfaction; and the King granted favours. Clement, delighted with his foundation, often visited the

Brothers and testified his liveliest attachment to them. On several occasions, he proved by his acts that his heart was in the work; and he even indignantly rejected his father's advice to abandon it.

But, in course of time, riches and honours came to dazzle the young founder: towards the close of 1709, the rich abbey of Saint-Calais was conferred on him, with a canonry in the cathedral of Le Mans; in 1711, his father received a patent of nobility from Louis XIV. Unconsciously at first, his mind was subjected to a slow infiltration of the sentiments of interest, pride and ambition. He no longer felt the same lively interest in a work so modest as that of a school for the training of country schoolmasters. Great moral force is necessary to love things obscure in the midst of grandeur. The abbé Clement lacked this strength of soul. Under the pretext of dignity, he stooped even to the lowest degree of baseness. For, he not only took no further interest in the work of the schools, but he went so far as to refuse to refund the money for which he had signed the receipt; he did not blush to deny the debt. He soon pretended that he had given the foundation of Saint-Denis only forced co-operation; and at the instigation of his father, he went so far as to accuse John Baptist De La Salle of having suborned a minor by making him sign a promise of money.

When the Saint learned of this new, odious trachery, he hastily returned from the South, where he was visiting his schools, hoping that an honest explanation would bring out the truth, save the endangered work of Saint-Denis and clear his honour of the accusation that he had suborned a minor. But the Clements, so lately risen from the people, understood nothing of the noble-

ness of his proceedings; the son maintained his calumnious accusations, and the father, casting aside all means of settlement, laid the affair before the civil lieutenant of the Châtelet. On January 23rd 1712, the magistrate cited before him the victim of such crying dishonesty.

Obliged to make his defence, John Baptist proceeded with as much moderation as disinterestedness. Having got together all the papers which clearly demonstrated his right, he drew up a Memorial justifying himself, which he put into the hands of trustworthy persons. Then, full of confidence in the justice of his case, he departed once more for the South.

But he had not reckoned with treason. The abbé Clement, now become his enemy, intrigued against him; Rogier, disowning his friend, declared himself an aggrieved party in the case, and demanded that the house of Saint-Denis should be adjudged to him; the persons in whose hands the Saint had placed his defence deserted him, for they did not make use of their great influence to prevent such great wickedness.

The judgments pronounced by the Châtelet were such as one could expect under similar circumstances: John Baptist was condemned to return the receipt for five thousand two hundred *livres* to the abbé Clement, and also to restore to him the sum of two thousand three hundred *livres* that he had put into the work of Saint-Denis; at the same time his honour was blighted for suborning minors, and he was warned against "using such means" in future. The house at Saint-Denis was handed over to Rogier, who, however, had advanced no money at all, and the Brothers were enjoined by the

tribunal to quit within eight days; if not, the furniture would be thrown into the street.

All the papers, writs and judgments being sent to John Baptist, he was thrown into a profoundly dejected state. He was wounded in his rights, and his name was infamously stigmatized. And, however, neither injustice, nor humiliation troubled him so much as the fear of being abandoned by his Brothers. The Brothers had sent him, without commentary or protestation, the papers of the suit: had they not perhaps been already separated from him? This bitter question tormented his fatherly heart for a long time.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOJOURN IN THE SOUTH

1711-1714

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE VISITS THE ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE SOUTH

1711-1712

If trials and humiliations wounded the heart of John Baptist, they, however, in no way altered his love for his Institute, nor weakened his courage. He watched over all his foundations with indefatigable activity, and provided for the temporal and spiritual wants of the Brothers. At the commencement, he had established the regular visits of the schools and of the communities, and this because he was so thoroughly convinced that a paternal and vigilant inspection is sovereignly efficacious for the maintaining of men and institutions in good order. For a long time he himself performed this essential duty. But when the schools had multiplied, he was obliged to divide the work: in 1708, for example, Brother Ponce was charged with the inspection of

the schools of the South, and Brother Joseph got those of the East, whilst he reserved for himself those of Paris, Chartres, Dijon, Calais, Darnétal and Rouen.

Since the founding of the school in Avignon, in 1703, he was anxious to visit the South. The Brothers' schools were in full prosperity in these parts; his children ardently desired to see him; the benefactors of the schools wished for his presence among them; and he himself had conceived in the secret of his heart, the idea of opening a novitiate in Provence. At last he made up his mind to undertake this long journey, and started off in the beginning of the year 1711.

This first absence did not last eight months; for he left Paris on February 11th, and returned about the end of September of the same year. We know very little of this rapid journey, and even the itinerary of it is unknown.

Everywhere, his arrival was an agreeable surprise for the Brothers; for his coming had not been announced. The Bishops of the cities through which he passed, received him with distinction. His name was already known and venerated; he was welcomed by the inhabitants as the messenger of God. As he was not come to seek honours, he knew how to avoid public ovations, and hid himself with the Brothers in the solitude of their residence. His presence brought the benefit of retreats for his disciples; and during the recollection of eight days, he studied not only the wants of their souls, but also the manners and customs of the country, in order to adapt to them his methods of instruction; he also studied the prejudices and the faults of the people in order to remedy them.

At Avignon, his influence with the principal men of

the city must have been of great weight in bringing to a happy issue a lawsuit brought against the Brothers by the writing-masters. The magistrates, who were greater lovers of liberty than those of Paris and Rouen, did not require that the Brothers' pupils should be provided with a certificate of indigency, but left the primary education of the city to open competition. This was to permit the writing-masters to increase the number of their clients and to merit the confidence of the families, by means of their moral and pedagogic value. Such a liberal solution of the difficulty sheltered the Brothers from those vexatious attacks to which the Institute had been subjected in Paris, and prepared beforehand the triumph of the gratuitous system.

From Avignon, John Baptist went to Marseilles. The reception given him there was so flattering and apparently so cordial, that he resolved to open his projected novitiate in this city. But he had not then the time to go about its foundation; for he had been suddenly recalled to Paris on account of the disgraceful affair of the abbé Clement.

His journey through the provinces of the South, whilst showing him the wants of the people of the towns, excited his soul to extra zeal, if possible, for the schools. The poor children, deprived as elsewhere, of Christian masters, were here particularly exposed to the allurements of frivolity and the seductions of heresy; they were souls that must be saved from the Huguenot peril, as well as from ignorance and vice. He also found that the people were openhearted and the clergy sympathetic. A fertile field, that urgently required to be preserved from receiving bad seed, lay open before him. To found a large number of schools there, and

to form native masters in a novitiate, such was the holy ambition of his heart.

He, therefore, hurried to set in order the affairs that had called him to Paris. As soon as he had arranged, and put into trustworthy hands the papers relating to the lawsuit, he started for Provence, thus showing that he cared more for the interests of God and for the development of his Institute than he did for the defence of his personal reputation. And, because he had a presentiment that his absence would be prolonged, he provided for the government of the communities of the North; by an authenticated document, dated November 16th 1711, he named Brother Joseph, Visitor; to Brother Barthélemy there was confided the care of maintaining order and regularity during his absence, without, however, publicly establishing him his official representative. He no doubt thought of guiding him by frequent correspondence. It is certain that the Institute would have been regularly governed, had it not been for the misunderstanding caused by the Clement lawsuit. In any case, this arrangement incontestably proves that John Baptist's departure from Paris had, in no possible sense, the character of a flight: he neither feared his enemies, nor abandoned his Brothers: he simply went where the voice of God called him.

He left Paris in March 1712, and visited Avignon, Alais, Les Vans and Mende.

During the month that he passed with the Brothers in Avignon, he was not ashamed to teach the very youngest children, and to conduct them through the streets to church. One day, a gentleman who had witnessed this act of humility and afterwards saw him

at the altar in a glow of piety, wished to know who this priest was; and, when he was told that he was the founder of the work of the schools: "I am not surprised", said he, "because his countenance and gait clearly manifest that he is a holy priest."

To visit Les Vans and Mende, the Servant of God had to cross the mountains, of which the crags and precipices were less dangerous than the fierce Huguenots that infested them; but when there was question of bringing joy to his isolated Brothers by his presence and encouragement, no dangers could stop him.

A rather delicate question had just arisen with regard to the school of Vans. The Bishop of Uzès who appreciated the Brothers of this school, entertained pretensions concerning them, that would have been very awkward for the administration of the Institute. He wished to lay down a rule that no Brother should be changed without his consent; it was, he said, to assure the stability of the successful masters, which stability was essential to their influence on the children and on the families. John Baptist did not hesitate to travel to Uzès to represent to the zealous prelate that, in a Congregation, the superior must have absolute power to dispose of the subjects who compose it; of course, the superior would always consult the principle of stability, but he alone could see to the general interests of the Institute and the particular advantages of each community. The Bishop of Uzès, convinced by this reasoning, allowed him to make at Vans the changes he had contemplated, and bestowed on him many testimonies of his kindness.

From Uzès, John Baptist went to Marseilles, where he was impatiently awaited.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE AT MARSEILLES.
HIS NOVITIATE. — TERRIBLE PERSECUTION RAISED
AGAINST HIM.

1712-1713

The Saint went to Marseilles with a heart filled with hope; such ardent sympathies called him there, that he counted on making a rather long stay, and on working efficaciously at the propagation of his beloved work of the schools.

He met with very much attention at the beginning. Those who passed as the most fervent of the clergy desired to speak to him; they even invited him to honour with his presence the conferences which they frequently held among themselves. The Bishop, Xavier De Belzunce, showed him and the Brothers the greatest kindness, and did not hide from him his intention of handing over to his care all the charity schools in the city.

But it would be necessary first to train subjects belonging to the same region, and who would, of course, be acquainted with the language and customs of Provence. Thus the creation of a novitiate became a necessity. This undertaking was effected as if by magic, for nearly all the parish priests of the city wished to contribute towards its establishment: some advanced the initial expenses, others gave assurances for the future; the laity felt themselves drawn into the good work by the enthusiasm of their clergy. A convenient house was hired, without delay, in a quiet quarter, and was soon furnished. The recruiting of novices was at

once begun in different districts, and, in a short time, the number of postulants far surpassed the expectation of the Servant of God.

In order to be at leisure to train these young men, John Baptist retired with them into complete solitude. There, away from all the vanities and illusions of the world, he revealed to them the secrets of religious perfection, nourished their hearts and souls with his fervent exhortations, and encouraged and animated them by his example. He devoted himself all the more exclusively to this work of the interior life, as he had then broken off almost all correspondence with the communities of the North; because it was at this time that he had some doubts as to the perfect attachment of the Brothers of Paris. But if the Clement lawsuit gave him great affliction, the happy enthusiasm for his works at Marseilles gave him, in return, great consolation.

However, remarks his biographer, the complete success of his undertaking was still a source of anxiety; he who had been accustomed to sow in tears, feared that so rapid a growth would never come to maturity. Alas! this was no idle presentiment; for, with a sudden change of opinion, the burning ardour that Marseilles had for his work now turned against him in paroxysms of violent persecution. Whence this change, so sudden and so radical? We must look for the cause of it in John Baptist's unchangeable opposition to the Jansenist party.

The Jansenist struggle was at this time at a white heat in France; and nowhere was it greater than at Marseilles. One of this party's clever tactics was by slow seduction to gain over to Jansenism those men whose intellectual talents or moral works made them

the most conspicuous. The conquest of so considerable a man as John Baptist De La Salle seemed worthy of all their efforts; therefore, he met with great attention, was assisted, flattered and powerfully sustained in his enterprises. Though the snare was cunningly and insidiously laid, yet our Saint saw it and so escaped it. At the conferences to which he was invited, he heard the severest criticisms uttered against the Roman Pontiff; in his presence were sustained propositions in which those who did not accept the doctrine of Jansenius were ranked among the Pelagians. The Catholic sentiment of his soul was indignant at this attitude; and he at once and entirely broke with protectors who did not profess the same faith as he. Rather than tarnish the purity of his belief, and rather than that there should be any doubt as to his real sentiments, he preferred to expose, by an open and frank confession, his cherished works to certain ruin.

The Jansenists, despairing of gaining him, and irritated at finding in him a courageous censor, treated him thereafter as an enemy, and the war was waged with desperation.

It was opened by refusing him the charity school of Saint-Martin, just at the moment when he was about to take possession of it for his Brothers. Intrigue set itself to work for the purpose of inspiring diffidence in the methods of the new masters, and the donors were drawn off, and even the Bishop himself was won by the Saint's enemies. John Baptist, on hearing this, uttered no complaint; he calmly repeated: "May God be blessed! it is apparently His will that this foundation should not be made."

By means of perfidious insinuations, the two Brothers

who taught the school of the young sailors, in the parish of Saint-Laurent, were detached from him. The Saint insisted that these two religious should daily come to the novitiate to renew their fervour by taking part in the exercises of piety; but, through the influence of the benefactors of the school, they succeeded in shaking off a duty that weighed on them, and went so far as to say one day to their holy founder: "that he was come into Provence only to destroy and not to build up."

The novitiate was the Saint's principal work: and it too was attacked. Pecuniary assistance was at first suppressed. But this produced no effect on a man accustomed to support hunger and thirst, and who knew how to inspire his disciples with the love of the most painful privations. Seeing that this fortress could not be reduced by famine, the enemy resolved to enter it, and sow therein the spirit of dissension. And, in fact, several novices were seduced and left. These poor deserters became instruments of persecution in the hands of the Jansenist party. The practices of the novitiate, grossly deformed by their description of them, and thus misunderstood by the public, furnished matter for a libel against the Saint. He wrote, but in vain, a Memorial in self-defence; his answer did not arrest the calumny. Things take their course in this way every time that scandal happens: the ear listens with curiosity to the accusation, while indifference is shown for the defence.

The result of this odious campaign was disastrous. The Servant of God lost the esteem of a great number of persons; he saw his novitiate depopulated and almost ruined. To add to his sorrow, certain Brothers of the

South profited by the confusion to exempt themselves from regularity. It was then that, in order to calm his enemies, the Saint resolved to leave. But what was he to do?

He had wished, for a long time, to visit Rome : did not the present occasion appear propitious to go and pray at the tomb of the Apostles, and to cast himself at the feet of the Vicar of Jesus Christ to give a proof of his sincere attachment and submission? In union with Brother Gabriel, his beloved disciple, he would solicit the approbation of his Institute, and, fortified with the pontifical approval, he would defend his cherished work of the schools with renewed courage and more certain hope of success. The Bishop of Marseilles, hearing of his intention, stopped him, and invited him to stay and take possession of the school of Notre-Dame des Accoules. " May God be blessed " ! said the Saint simply, " here I am already back from Rome. It is not His will that I should go to Rome; He desires that I should be employed otherwise. "

The illusion was of short duration; for, all the affection of the Bishop could not protect him from the fury of the Jansenists, and the school des Accoules fell through, as had that of Saint-Martin. Troubled with all these failures, the Saint fell into a painful perplexity; he asked himself : " whether a work that everyone opposed might not be the fancy of his own mind. " In this state of anguish, meditation failed to be his attraction; heaven seemed shut over his head. He retired from Marseilles, saying : " I am persuaded that my absence will calm the agitation of my enemies, and inspire them with peaceful thoughts for my dear children. " Thus, after a year's hard work in this large

city, he seemed to have done nothing, and he left in sadness. Yet it was impossible that the soil that had been watered with so many bitter tears could remain sterile; according to the assurance given him by a devout servant of God, the Brothers would yet multiply in this place, and their schools flourish.

After leaving Marseilles, John Baptist retired to the desert of Sainte-Baume; and, after forty days of penance and prayer, he felt comforted. It was then that his unflagging love for his Institute urged him to go to his children at Grenoble, whose schools he had not yet visited.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE AT GRENOBLE.

— HE VISITS THE GRANDE-CHARTREUSE
AND MAKES A RETREAT AT PARMÉNIE

1713-1714

The little community of Grenoble was living in religious peace; for the troubles of Marseilles had not made themselves felt there. John Baptist stayed there about six months, from the end of summer 1713 until the spring of the following year. Being with disciples whom he found very fervent and tenderly attached to him, he gave full vent to his attraction for prayer and mortification.

He selected the most solitary and inconvenient room in the Brothers' house, and there he lived, separated from the world, as a religious in his cloister. Though he had friends among the clergy of the town, he abstained from all visits and remained hidden in the

voluntary obscurity in which he enveloped himself. The hours of the day and of the night which he consecrated to prayer appeared to him the best proof that he could give of his devotedness to his Institute.

It was not to abandon his retreat, but rather to increase his love for it, that he visited the Grande-Chartreuse, where he spent three days, sharing the silent and penitent life of the sons of St. Bruno. He was very careful to conceal his identity in a house which would have loaded an ancient Canon of Rheims with honour. However, from his distinguished appearance and from the holiness that shone in all his person, the prior was convinced that he was not an ordinary visitor, and he pressed him to remain with them for a longer time. But all his efforts were in vain : for John Baptist did not allow himself to be persuaded either by the prior's pressing invitations or by his own attraction for solitude : his chartreuse was his cell in the midst of his Brothers. He returned and resumed with them his austere habit of penance and prayer.

He sent the Brother Director of Grenoble to visit the schools of the North, of which he desired to know the situation otherwise than by letter, and he himself replaced him in the school. But he would take only the youngest children who were learning their *a b c*, and especially the least talented, and who through lack of intelligence and memory tried the master's patience the most. His humility drew him to this thankless work, and, as a reward for his condescension, God gave him a special grace to cause the most ignorant and the most troublesome to advance. As he used to do in Paris, Rheims, and Avignon, here also he conducted the children in ranks through the streets to hear Mass

every day after the morning class. The people of Grenoble learned to know him then, and they conceived for him a lively feeling of respect and admiration; they distinguished him from all the clergy of the town and called him "the holy priest".

During his stay at Grenoble, he had another attack of rheumatism, but of such violence as to put his life in danger. This caused great anxiety among the inhabitants of the town, and his dear disciples were in great fear that he might be taken from them: the sympathy shown for him was so profound, that everyone seemed to be as much alarmed as if threatened with the loss of one of his own family. John Baptist alone remained calm in the midst of his sufferings, and used to say with Job: "May God be praised! May His will be done, and not ours! If we receive health from Him, it is only just that we should accept sickness with constancy. May His holy name be blessed for ever!" All the cares that were lavished on him were ineffectual. Then out of love for his children and his work, he submitted again to the painful remedy which had been used at Vaugirard, and for which his poor body had an instinctive dread. Once more he extended his crippled members on a sort of gridiron, and odoriferous plants were ignited beneath him; and during all the time that his flesh was being impregnated with the burning fumes, the Saint did not heave a single sigh; he contented himself with saying to God that he desired to suffer for his dear work.

The remedy was efficacious, and the rheumatism passed away; but his strength returned only slowly. To hasten his convalescence, he agreed to go to Parménie for a few weeks; the abbé De Saléon, John Baptist's friend,

and vicar general of Grenoble, had his country house at Parménie, which was situated about seven leagues from Grenoble, on the right bank of the Isère, and was a steep hill terminating in a narrow plateau, where the neighbouring villagers had come for ages to honour and venerate the Most Blessed Virgin in an humble sanctuary. This place of pilgrimage had lately been restored by a poor shepherdess, remarkable for her simple, pure life, and known in the country by the name of Sister Louise. This pious maiden had acquired an extraordinary reputation for holiness, and she had a special gift for the discernment of spirits; by a singular favour of Heaven, she was able to see into the recesses of the heart and exercise over souls a sovereign influence by which they were won to God. She was sixty-eight years of age, when John Baptist arrived at Parménie, in the month of February 1714.

During the fortnight's rest and retreat that he enjoyed in the hermitage of his friend De Saléon, he had several conferences with Sister Louise and consulted her as an oracle of God. He related his life to her, he made known the Institute and the work of the schools; he told her how he had been driven away from Marseilles, and that he felt he was better fitted to destroy than build up a work. Would it not be better for him and the Institute, if he were to end his days in solitude, and think no more about anything but the salvation of his soul? "Such is not the will of God", replied Sister Louise; "you must not abandon the family of which God has made you the father. Work is your lot and you must persevere in it till the end of your days."

Strengthened by these words, in which he believed to hear the voice of God, John Baptist returned to Grenoble,

where fresh struggles were in store for him. The Bull *Unigenitus*, which condemned Jansenism anew in the *Réflexions morales de Quesnel*, had just been promulgated by the Bishop of Grenoble; this document which, in the mind of Pope Clement XI., was to put an end to all disputes and calm men's minds, gave the rebels an occasion to stir up revolt. But John Baptist, who was not content with a personal submission to the Bull, believed it to be a sacerdotal duty to denounce with zeal the condemned doctrines. He assembled the Brothers of Grenoble, expounded to them the Bull, and clearly explained the hundred and one propositions, extracted from Quesnel's book. He manifested his sentiments with such fearlessness, that it was a great happiness for the faithful Catholics of Grenoble to find themselves supported by one whose holiness was known to all. A devout person who had a copy of the condemned book received a severe remonstrance from him. "What"! said he, "you keep the book which has just been condemned by the Church!" The Jansenists did not pardon his zeal; however, the calumnies they published against him had no effect in a town where he was venerated for his personal virtue, and highly esteemed for the work of the schools.

While he was at Parménie, God sent him Lieutenant Dulac De Montisambert, a young man predestined to become a Brother, and to embalm the Institute with the perfume of his virtues.

WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THE NORTH DURING
THE ABSENCE OF JOHN BAPTIST. — THE BROTHERS
RECALL THEIR SUPERIOR IN THE NAME OF OBEDIENCE.

1712-1714

The absence of John Baptist was not without producing some confusion in the communities of the North, especially in Paris. It is certain he had not gone away without organizing the government, since he had appointed a Visitor and confided the authority to Brother Barthélemy; he had also kept up frequent correspondence with the principal Brothers. While he was at Grenoble, he deputed the Brother Director to visit the communities of the North, so that he might be rightly informed by him of the state of the Brothers there. His departure had not been a flight, nor was his prolonged, voluntary exile a desertion or a sign of indifference.

However, the Institute would have suffered real injury in his absence, if the hand of God had not safeguarded it. At the commencement especially, the Brothers of the North heard very little of him. The majority did not follow his movements, and so did not know in what retreat he had taken refuge. Some maliciously disposed persons circulated the news that he had abandoned the Institute through sheer discouragement. Several letters that had been addressed to him did not reach him; and, perhaps, he did not reply to all he received. Why then seclude himself in such disquieting silence? Did he wish to oblige the Brothers to

live without him, under the authority of a superior chosen from among themselves? Or did he keep a reserve that he thought was warranted by the apparent defection of the Brothers of Paris? We cannot say. What we know is, that in the South he worked only for his Institute, and was preoccupied with all his foundations, those of Paris included.

On the other hand, Brother Barthélemy lacked prestige and authority to govern the Institute under such critical circumstances. He was a kind, conciliating man, loved by all; but he was too timid and too modest to make use of a power with which his Superior had not officially invested him. To the sovereign and uncontested authority of the founder succeeded the badly defined and purely provisional authority of Brother Barthélemy.

His virtue inspired such veneration, that the majority of the Brothers, both of Paris and elsewhere, submitted to his authority. But several subjects lost their first fervour and with it their vocation; and it was found necessary to expel a few disobedient ones.

The Saint's enemies took advantage of his absence to carry out their long contemplated plans. What the Saint had always rejected, Brother Barthélemy was about to agree to. They succeeded in persuading him that it would be very much to the advantage of the Institute, if the Bishops of the dioceses in which there were Brothers, were to appoint an ecclesiastic as their superior: this was the new form of government that M. De La Chétardye had been thinking of for ten years. Influenced by suggestions coming from prominent persons, the humble Brother Barthélemy, by an act of weakness for which he should not be too severely

condemned, wrote to all those Bishops who had Brothers in their dioceses, praying them to provide an ecclesiastical superior for the Brothers.

The Bishops were amazed at this proposal, because they had found it just that the Brothers should live under the same Superior General and be entirely dependent on him; it scandalized and irritated the Brothers, because it appeared to them to be in opposition to one of their fundamental Rules and would bring on the ruin of the Institute; John Baptist's friends were alarmed at it, for they regarded it as an act of grave imprudence which would destroy his work by breaking its unity.

Nevertheless, a few ecclesiastical superiors were appointed, and we must pay homage to the delicacy they employed in the exercise of their powers; for, by a special grace of God, they had no other concern than to see that the Rules were observed according to the spirit of the Institute.

There was one exception however, and it was in Paris. M. De Brou, a priest of Saint-Sulpice, was not satisfied with merely nominal authority. "You call me your superior", said he to the Brothers one day, "you should give marks of it." The first mark he exacted was an official nomination, signed by the Brothers; but this act, obtained by moral violence, which the Brothers promptly regretted, was torn out of the register of the house, as soon as John Baptist returned. M. De Brou, after his official nomination, made a new copy of the Rules, according to his ideas, and presented them to Cardinal De Noailles for his approbation. But the Cardinal, having kept the new Rules during nearly eight months, finally caused M. De Brou to be informed

that he did not judge it necessary to change the Rules and Constitutions of the Brothers.

During this time, the Brothers took all possible means to protect their threatened Institute : they multiplied their prayers, they gave themselves to a stricter observance of their Rules, they attached themselves closer and closer to Brother Barthélemy, whose advice in future was for them a command ; but, above all, they wrote to their dearly beloved father, in his solitude at Grenoble, to convey to him their fears, and to implore him to return to them.

At the first news of these attacks on his work, the Servant of God contented himself with his usual aspiration of faith : “ May God be blessed ! If it be His work, He will take care of it. ” More pressing solicitations poured in on him from day to day, and as the Servant of God seemed in no hurry, the principal Brothers of Paris and Saint-Denis, addressed the following letter to him on April 1st 1714 : “ To our very dear Father : We, the principal Brothers of the Christian Schools, having in view the greater glory of God, the greater good of the Church and of the Society, recognize that it is of the utmost necessity that you should resume the care and government of the work of God, which is likewise yours, since it has pleased the Lord to make use of you to establish and guide it for so long a time. Everybody is convinced that God has given and still continues to give you the grace and the talent necessary for the right government of this new Company, which is of such great utility to the Church ; and it is with justice that we testify that you have always guided it with great success and edification.

For these reasons, Sir, we most humbly beseech you,

and command you in the name and on behalf of the Body of the Society, to which you have promised obedience, to take up immediately the care of the general government of the Society. ”

This touching injunction, coming from his children, stirred the heart of the father, and the appeal made to his vow of obedience dispelled all hesitation. “ I wish to obey the Brothers ”, said he to those who tried to detain him; “ they command me to return to Paris. ” Without delay, he bade farewell to the Brothers of Grenoble, as well as to the benefactors of his schools in that town.

However, before taking the road for Paris, he went to Mende, where some serious discord claimed his presence. Here he was so badly insulted by a Brother, that his fatherly heart was profoundly grieved, but the humble patience which he showed on this occasion obtained the guilty Brother's repentance, and for the foundation of Mende the blessings of God by which it was ever afterwards successful.

As soon as he had accomplished this mission, he hastened to respond to the call of his Brothers and children. He arrived in Paris August 10th 1714, about forty days after the death of M. De La Chétardye. He presented himself less as a master wishing to assert his authority than as an inferior ready to obey the Brothers who had called him. “ Here I am ”, said he, “ what do you desire of me? ” They had already expressed very explicitly in their letter the reasons they had for calling him : it was that he would resume the government of the Institute. He, on the contrary, aspired to the lowest rank. In his humility, he looked on himself as being thenceforward hurtful to the Institute, and he

wished that, to repair what he was pleased to call his faults, another superior should take his place. The Brothers, who had suffered so much by his absence, and who so much feared the changes with which their Rules were threatened, refused to relieve him of his burden, and, on their knees, and with tears in their eyes, begged him to continue to govern them.

The Servant of God did not resist their prayer, nor did he insist on the election of another superior, because he saw and understood that the hour of Providence had not yet come. But he behaved in such a manner, that the new situation should serve as a transition between the old state of things and the definitive term at which he aimed. While Brother Barthélemy attended to affairs, presided at the common exercises, resolved ordinary difficulties, in a word, filled the office of superior, the humble Superior, who was still the soul of the Institute, kept himself in the background, dividing his time between prayer and the writing of works of piety. In this way he accustomed the Brothers to do without him.

CHAPTER IX.

LAST YEARS

1715-1719

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE TRANSFERS
HIS NOVITIATE TO SAINT-YON. — HE VISITS
BOULOGNE AND CALAIS.

1715-1716

After a year's stay in Paris, John Baptist resolved to transfer his novitiate to Saint-Yon, and to go there himself that he might be in a more favourable position to prepare for death. His novices had considerably diminished in numbers, because the annoyances of the preceding years had been disastrous to the recruiting of subjects for the Institute. The troublesome meddling of the ecclesiastical superior in Paris with the government of the community was not less hurtful to its development than to its liberty of action in other respects. It was therefore thought opportune to deliver the very heart and soul of the Congregation from this interference. Besides, Louis XIV. died in the month of

September 1715, and by his death Madam De Maintenon lost the powerful influence which she had so liberally used in favour of the Institute; this sudden diminution of material resources imposed on the superior the necessity of dividing the community.

The novitiate was therefore removed from Paris in the month of October 1715, and two months later, John Baptist himself started for Rouen.

During six years, John Baptist had made only rare and short apparitions at Saint-Yon. Great progress had been made there in that interval. The kindness of the first President M. De Pontcarré had not cooled for an instant; Canon Blain, the future historian of the Servant of God, exercised with as much discretion as zeal his rôle of ecclesiastical superior of the Brothers. Under the prudent direction of Brother Dosithée, all the different works had developed: in view of the novices' return to Saint-Yon, an isolated building had been constructed for them; the boarding school had been better organized; and at the instigation of M. De Pontcarré, a Reformatory had also been opened.

While following his bent for solitude and prayer, and attending to the composition of his Meditations, John Baptist watched with the utmost paternal care and solicitude over these several establishments.

Although Brother Barthélemy was an excellent master of novices, the Saint actively occupied himself with them. He lived among them, took part in their exercises of piety, and mixed in their conversations; he studied their defects, and made himself acquainted with their intellectual and moral powers. In the public conferences, he excited them to fervour; and in his private conversations with them, he formed them

one by one and trained them in the art of conquering themselves. By a special gift of God, he accommodated himself to the wants of each ; full of condescension for the beginners, and of goodness for the timid, he urged on the lukewarm, humiliated the proud, and encouraged and strengthened the wavering.

The boarding school received from John Baptist those wise regulations which fixed both the course of studies and the disciplinary organization, which have scarcely suffered any modifications in modern establishments of a similar kind. To the masters in particular, he gave those exalted principles of Christian education which have lost nothing of their actuality. "As, concerning the pupils", he says, "the first duty of the master is to give them a religious and civil education, they should watch over themselves so that there will not appear anything in them but examples of virtue, union and perfect accord ; they must be pious, charitable, just, gifted with great evenness of temper, zealous for forming their children in goodness, and for developing their aptitude and talents according to the different states for which they may be destined by their parents. They will vainly endeavour to gain their esteem, their attachment, their entire docility to the lessons given in class, unless they themselves give open proofs that they are inspired at all times by religion, reason, equity and decorum, which render them irreproachable. It is absolutely essential that a master never give a lesson, or any instruction whatever, without having thoroughly prepared it, and so be able to do it well."

It is easy to understand that the counsels of so enlightened a man were sought for from all parts. The

Brothers, overjoyed at having found their father, consulted him either by letter or orally; and, in spite of his desire to keep in the background, the Saint could not escape their filial importunities.

Illustrious visitors desirous to hear him, came to Saint-Yon. The first magistrates of Rouen and the most prominent ecclesiastics made it their pleasing duty to call and see him. MM. Gense and De La Cocherie, the principal benefactors of the schools of Calais and Boulogne, wished to pay their respects to the founder of the work of the schools; the Saint on the occasion permitted himself such heartfelt expansiveness as he would never have done except in the company of his most intimate friends. "If God", said he to them, when He let me see the good that the Institute could realize, had at the same time made known to me the difficulties and the crosses that should accompany it, my courage would have failed, and, far from having taken it on me, I should not have dared to touch it even with the ends of my fingers. Exposed to oppositions, I saw myself persecuted by prelates from whom I had expected assistance. Some of my own children rose up against me, and added to the crosses from without those much heavier ones from within which are the most painful. If God had not upheld this edifice in a visible manner, long ago would it have been buried under its own ruins."

MM. Gense and Cocherie invited him to come and see for himself the prosperity of his schools at Calais and Boulogne, and, though quite unwell at the time, he set out in the month of July 1716.

His unobtrusiveness was alarmed by the extraordinary honours awaiting him at Boulogne; the people

turned out to see the man whose name was blessed by all the poor since his disciples had taken charge of the schools; the Marquis De Colembert, who was commander of the place, lavished on him marks of the most respectful sympathy; M. De La Cocherie made it an honour to receive him as his guest; but none felt such great happiness as the little community of the Brothers.

John Baptist was not less honoured at Calais. M. Gense offered him the hospitality of his house. One day as he was at table with his generous host, he detected an artist painting his portrait, which so annoyed him that he would never accept another invitation from M. Gense. The delicate attentions of which he was the object, altered neither the firmness of his character nor his apostolic liberty. While officiating at Calais, on the feast of the Assumption, he noticed that the dean made no allusion to the feast of the day in his sermon. Suspecting that some Jansenistic influence had been the cause of this reticence, he, with much simplicity, made an observation to the dean regarding his silence about the feast. The dean, struck with the reasons which the Saint gave him in favour of devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, humbly promised to repair his fault on the following Sunday: God so blessed this truly sacerdotal deference, that his audience were profoundly moved by the sermon.

JOHN BAPTIST RESIGNS THE OFFICE OF SUPERIOR.

— ELECTION OF BROTHER BARTHÉLEMY.

1716-1717

On his return to Saint-Yon, John Baptist prepared to put into effect the project which he had formed two years before.

His increasing infirmities announced his approaching end, and he took them as the warnings of Providence, inviting him to resign the office of superior. During thirty years he had desired to leave the first place, that he might have a better opportunity for the practice of obedience, and might have more time to devote to prayer and to a life hidden in God; could he not be relieved of the office of Superior now, at least, when the shades of life's evening were beginning to envelop him, in order to recollect himself in silent preparation for death? Besides the interests of the Institute demanded that, while he was yet living, a Brother Superior should be elected, because then the transfer of power could be effected without trouble; whereas, after his death, a thousand obstacles would be sure to spring up.

The Brothers were so moved by this well-founded consideration to which the failing health of John Baptist gave additional weight, that he gained their adhesion to it. Their great fear so far was to be deprived of the guidance and advice of their dearly beloved father; but since he had assured them that he would be entirely with them and would always treat them as his children, why not consent to the change which he proposed?

The Brothers who were present agreed to his idea,

and John Baptist set to work for the election of the new Superior. He made all the arrangements with a regularity that revealed consummate prudence and very uncommon practical sense : from the way in which the preparations had been made, all the Brothers ratified the election in advance.

On December 4th 1716, he assembled the six principal Brothers of Rouen, and they unanimously agreed to delegate Brother Barthélemy to visit all the communities, to explain to them the situation and to get their adhesion to the projected election. Invested with this authority, Brother Barthélemy visited the twenty-two houses of the Institute and heard the opinions of all the Brothers. When he returned, five months after, he brought with him twenty-two authentic documents, bearing ninety-nine signatures, by which the said ninety-nine Brothers unanimously agreed that an Assembly should be held at Saint-Yon to elect a new Superior and make a revision of the Rules.

Strengthened by this consent, John Baptist convoked all the Directors for May 16th 1717, Pentecost Sunday. Only sixteen attended, but all the Brothers were present in heart and in will, since they had, in advance, given their adhesion to the acts of this General Chapter.

The assembly was opened in the form of a retreat ; for the holy founder desired that his disciples should be in close union with God and in total dependence on the Holy Ghost. He gave, with his usual paternal solicitude, the counsels that he believed to be opportune for their having perfect purity of intention, and for the regulating of the order that should be followed in the deliberations and in the election ; he even com-

posed a prayer for the occasion to be recited several times a day.

Tuesday May 18th was the day appointed for the election. Notwithstanding the pressing solicitations of the Brothers, John Baptist declined to preside in order to give them entire liberty for their vote. When he had learned that Brother Barthélemy had been elected to be his successor, he manifested no surprise, and contented himself with saying : “ He has fulfilled the duties of superior for a long time.” This choice, which was according to his wishes, surprised no one. For, Brother Barthélemy, by his kindness, devotedness and supernatural spirit, had won every one’s sympathy; and the Brothers, the majority of whom had been formed by him, would not find the least difficulty in obeying his orders.

He alone strongly protested against the honour that had been conferred on him, and besought the Brothers to permit him to decline; but the election, made according to the spirit of God, was maintained. The newly elected Superior was given two Assistants to aid him in his many and increasing duties : they were Brother John, the Director of the Paris community, and Brother Joseph, the Director of the schools in Rheims.

Who shall say what was the Saint’s joy on this occasion? The future of his dear work was assured by this election, and the whole weight of the administration no longer pressed on his feeble shoulders ; the projects of his adversaries were baffled, and he could, at last, and without prejudice to his Institute, follow his attraction for obedience and the hidden life. Certain discontented persons censured his resignation : some accused him of having lost courage; others were so

ungracious as to see in his retirement the desire of being remarked and of making himself conspicuous. These foolish criticisms exercised his patience and satisfied his desire for humiliations; but no regret troubled his peace of mind.

With what joyful alacrity, from that moment, he took the rank of an inferior and gave himself up to the practice of obedience!

Nothing appeared in his conduct that could give the least indication, or arouse the faintest suspicion of his having ever commanded; in him there remained, even in his tone of voice, nothing of that which sometimes remains imprinted on the characters of those who have, at some time, exercised authority. He hid, as much as he possibly could, his dignity of priest, so as to be the equal of the Brothers; one would have said, on seeing him so humble and ashamed of himself, that he was a priest condemned to do penance in some monastery. He did his best to rid himself of that moral influence which his character of founder gave him; for he told the Brothers who continued to address themselves to him in confidence and ask his permission: "Go to the Brother Superior, I am nothing... I do not wish to meddle with anything any longer, except to prepare for death and to weep over my sins." He pushed his humility to such a length that he did not wish to be reckoned among the superiors of the Institute, and asked that Brother Barthélemy be inscribed at the head of the list, as if he had essayed to efface all remembrance of himself from a work which will always bear his vigorous impress and will ever live up to the apostolic spirit with which he so thoroughly filled it.

Brother Barthélemy rivaled his beloved father in

his humility; he never failed in respect towards him, but on the contrary, he at all times, showed him the most filial deference. By this respectful conduct he so conciliated the affection of all the Brothers, that the change of administration was effected without the least disagreeableness, and when, two years later, the Saint died, the Institute suffered no dangerous shock.

But the General Chapter of 1717 was, after having elected a Superior, to proceed with the revision of the Rules. It did, in fact, devote several sessions to the said revision. The text that John Baptist had prepared in 1695, and which he had retouched from time to time, was most minutely examined by the Directors. The Saint desired this careful examination by the principal members of the Institute, that the Rules might thus receive more authority, having been discussed and fixed by those who had lived a long time under them.

After the Brothers had maturely deliberated, their observations were submitted to the Founder, so that they might be revised in the manner that would appear best to him. He worked at this revision with the greatest care. Several parts were added to the first copy of the Rules, particularly what concerns modesty and regularity: for these additions, John Baptist took his inspiration mostly in the Constitution of the Company of Jesus. As soon as the Rule had been re-examined by its author, it was initialed and signed by Brother Barthélemy, and a copy was sent to each of the communities. To this text sent forth in 1718, succeeding General Chapters have added only modifications of minor importance, so that the actual Rules and Constitutions of the Institute faithfully represent the first institution,

and the Brothers, by observing them, are not animated with any other spirit than that which animated their father.

JOHN BAPTIST'S STAY
AT SAINT-NICOLAS DU CHARDONNET. —
HIS RETURN TO SAINT-YON
AND THE HOLY LIFE HE THERE LEADS
1717-1718

John Baptist had finished the work of the revision when, in the autumn of 1717, he accompanied Brother Barthélemy to Paris. He was called there to receive a legacy yielding two hundred and sixty *livres* a year that his old friend Rogier had willed to him at his death. Rogier, in his last moments, remembered his infidelity to the Servant of God; his conscience reminded him that, in the house of Saint-Denis, which was handed over to him by the judgment of the Châtelet in 1712, there was a sum of money to the value of five thousand two hundred *livres* that belonged to John Baptist De La Salle. Our Saint, as usual, had quite forgotten all about this. Worldly interests moved him so little that at the news of this tardy, though necessary restitution, he exclaimed: "What was he thinking about when he made a will in my favour; was he not aware that I have renounced all worldly goods, and am no longer permitted to have anything as my own?"

His humility had all but deprived the Institute of this just restitution. Because he was named in the will Superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, he

refused to sign the receipt until the title which was no longer his, had been erased. He made it a point of honour not to tolerate the least equivocation; and his delicacy on this point was so extreme, that he would have sacrificed the money rather than tarnish his honesty.

This money came just when it was urgently needed; for, the property of Saint-Yon, having been put up for sale, the Brothers found themselves in a position to purchase it. In consideration of their poverty, the lowest price asked was fifteen thousand *livres*. In view of this purchase, John Baptist had already placed six thousand *livres* in local securities; some charitable friends of the Institute made important donations; but the total required could be realized but by means of Rogier's legacy; the executor of this will, when he learned the embarrassment in which the Brothers were, handed over to them the whole capital, five thousand two hundred *livres* instead of the annual interest he was directed to pay them.

While the Saint remained in Paris, he did not lodge with the Brothers at the Sèvres Gate; but it was prudence that kept him away from the house of his children. He was their superior no longer, he thought that his presence might give rise to umbrage. Fearing to be treated with too much honour, he carefully avoided all those marks of respect and obedience which he deemed should be henceforth paid only to Brother Barthélemy. Besides, all the antipathy against him had not yet entirely disappeared; to avert new difficulties for the Brothers, he questioned himself whether it would not be more prudent to live far from them?

Full of these humble thoughts, the Saint chose for his

temporary dwelling the fervent community of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, where the Brother Procurator paid his board and lodging. He lived there five months, giving full scope to his attraction for solitude and prayer; he produced such an impression of holiness on all the seminarians, that the superior, writing three years later, testified to it in the following letter: "We had the honour and the advantage", said the superior of Saint-Nicolas, "of possessing this holy priest in our seminary, from October 4th 1717 till March 7th 1718. This time was, as you see, very short; but it was long enough to recognize in him those particular gifts which God had bestowed on him, and also the graces which he endeavoured to hide from men. We remarked above all his zeal and extraordinary fervour for his own perfection, his profound humility and great love of mortification and poverty. Not content with being present every day at all the exercises of piety, he admitted to me that he devoted two and a half or three hours each day to meditation. He was always the first at every exercise, and there was no regulation that was not of importance to him. He did nothing without the advice or counsel of others, which always appeared to him better than his own. During recreation, he was always more willing to listen than to speak, and he was never heard to speak to his own advantage. His mortification confounded and at the same time edified us. Whenever he came to the seminary, he would never accept a room having a fire in it, and, instead of warming himself with the others during the time of recreation, he preferred to converse with some seminarians either in the halls or in the garden, so as to have an occasion to inspire them with a holy maxim or the detachment from

terrestrial things; and as his modesty, his recollected appearance and the unction of his conversations left no doubt that he practised much more than he inspired, it would be impossible to express in words the amount of good he did in this seminary. ”

This was the first time in forty years that John Baptist enjoyed real repose. He would very willingly have prolonged it; the desire of his heart was to finish his days in this community of Saint-Nicolas, so much the more, because by prayer he continued to live with his children and for them; he deemed that they could now expect nothing from him but his prayers. But the Brothers did not understand things in this way: it appeared to them that as long as their father did not live in their midst, he was theirs no longer; that he belonged to them, and it was to them therefore that he should give examples of virtue and counsels full of wisdom; and they asked themselves whether the world would not be right in criticising them, if they left their holy founder to finish his days in a community that was not his. To appease their filial anxiety and to respond to their legitimate desires, Brother Barthélemy begged John Baptist to return to Saint-Yon; and as it was a great sacrifice for the Servant of God to leave a solitude where he had at last lived unknown, the Directors of Saint-Nicolas had to intervene to remind him that this sacrifice was for him a duty of obedience. At the word obedience, all reluctance vanished, and the Saint started for Saint-Yon.

The thirteen months of his sojourn there were only a slow preparation for death.

He was peacefully approaching his last hour, drawn as he was towards it less by the weight of nature than by

his desire for heaven. The better to prepare for the supreme journey, he disengaged himself from all obstacles; he made every possible effort to detach himself from the world, from his family, and from his disciples themselves.

With that spirit of order in affairs that he had displayed all his life, he regulated in detail all that concerned the property of the Society, so that his death should not create any temporal embarrassment for the Brothers.

He broke the last links of the chain that bound him to his relations; he had already ceased to correspond with his brother Louis, whose appeal from the Bull *Unigenitus* had deeply wounded his heart; he sent the following note to a niece, who had asked him to assist at her religious profession: "I pray you to be satisfied with the promise to unite myself with you in this holy action."

Though he always had the greatest love for his work, he now endeavoured to make himself appear as a stranger to it. To those who wrote to him, he sent answer that he was "only a poor priest of Saint-Yon." To the Brothers who consulted him, he said: "Address yourselves to the Brother Superior; as for me, I am nothing. If you desire the success of what concerns Saint-Yon and our Institute, it is of importance that I should not interfere in any way whatever, because I am more capable of destroying than of building up."

The remainder of his life, however, was entirely devoted to the Institute and the Brothers. It was for his dear work that he passed long hours in prayer, in that solitary oratory situated at the other extremity of the enclosure, the floor and walls of which had been often

reddened with the bloody disciplines of the humble penitent. It was also for the Brothers that, after his coming forth from those fervent prayers, he wrote his enlightened *Explanation of the Method of mental Prayer*. It was love for souls that urged him to hear the confessions of the Brothers and novices, to confirm them in their vocation by means of spiritual conversations, to visit and console the young prisoners in the house of correction, to speak to the children of the boarding school, who listened to him with the greatest attention and showed him the most touching marks of their respectful affection.

God, who did not will that an iota of the life of His great servant should be lost, rendered it fruitful even to the last moment.

THE LAST STRUGGLES AND THE LAST HOUR

1719

The closing days of John Baptist were, in miniature, a faithful likeness of his struggles and of his virtues: his faith continued to shine with undiminished brightness, he drank the chalice of humiliation to the dregs, his poor body was delivered over to sufferings, and his soul flew at last to God in an ecstasy of piety, and in the exercise of charity.

The Jansenists of Boulogne, having written his name on the list of appellants, gave him another opportunity of openly professing his faith. Rather than that there should be the faintest shadow of a doubt about his belief, he broke the silence in which his humility would have

wished to envelop itself. "I have too much respect for our Holy Father the Pope", he wrote in a letter dated January 28th 1719, "and too much submission to the decisions of the Holy See not to acquiesce in them. It is enough for me that he who sits to-day in the chair of St. Peter has spoken by a Bull, which has been accepted by nearly all the Bishops in the world, and has condemned the hundred and one propositions extracted from Quesnel's book. After such an authentic decision of the Church, I say with Saint Augustine: "The cause is finished." Such a strong and open declaration was calculated to make enemies for the Brothers; but the Saint preferred to expose himself to open persecution rather than leave the least doubt hanging over his faith. His sons have ever since followed and practised this great lesson given them by their father.

Having avenged his faith, he entered anew into solitude and silence: humiliations still continued to track him. Some of those who were in immediate relation with him, were guilty of disrespectful language in his regard; a Serving Brother so far forgot himself as to say to him that he "in quality of a poor priest and no longer useful for anything, was supported in the house through charity." Such remarks which were less malicious than inconsiderate, repaid him for all the testimonies of veneration which he was receiving at Saint-Yon. Much more painful were the Archbishop's proceedings towards him. M. D'Aubigné was very strict with all the priests of his diocese, but particularly hard with John Baptist De La Salle. Not content with the rebuffs with which he treated him in several visits to the archiepiscopal palace, he cast a gloom over his last days by inflicting on him disciplinary punishment,

which would have remained as a mark of infamy on any one less holy than John Baptist. The origin of this was a difference with the parish priest of Saint-Sever.

In 1706, the parish priest of Saint-Sever, seeing that the works at Saint-Yon flourished, determined to attach this establishment to his parish, and succeeded in getting John Baptist to sign an agreement which obliged all the inmates of Saint-Yon to attend the services in the parish church. This agreement had been faithfully observed for a while; but the opening of the house of correction in 1715 had necessitated a change. As it was found impossible to conduct the young prisoners through the streets, the religious services had to be celebrated at Saint-Yon, as was done in all the prisons of the kingdom. But the pastor of Saint-Sever had strongly protested against this state of things; he had denounced to the ecclesiastical court this pretended violation of the agreement. John Baptist, when he was called upon to explain, did so with all moderation; the ecclesiastical judge rejected his reasons and did not fear to accuse him of falsehood. This ungrounded accusation, having been brought before the Archbishop, thereby assumed consistency, and it was to punish the alleged untruthfulness and violation of an agreement that the prelate notified John Baptist De La Salle, three or four days before his death, that his faculty for hearing confessions was withdrawn. The humble, dying priest accepted the blow without a word of complaint, and not one of those who surrounded him, knew, at that time, what a bitter chalice had been presented to him in his agony. Such an event is not unheard of in the lives of the Saints; but God permits such errors only when

He wishes to accomplish a great work of sanctification in the most faithful of His servants.

Sickness had already wrought great ravages in the body of John Baptist, and the soul, freeing itself by degrees from its prison of flesh, was about to wing its free flight to heaven.

His rheumatism had been tormenting him now for more than a year, and all remedies failed to assuage the pain; the humble patient was wholly resigned, and was never noticed to be happier than when he suffered most. Towards the end of February, the disease became complicated with a violent attack of asthma that several times threatened to suffocate the holy patient. His disciples became so alarmed, that they conjured him to interrupt his severe Lenten austerities; but he mildly replied that "as the victim was on the point of being immolated, it was now necessary to work the more at its purification." He submitted however to the slight alleviations imposed by obedience. But the hour of deliverance having struck for him, other infirmities supervened that baffled the filial solicitude of his disciples: two accidents that happened one after the other, produced an abscess in the head which soon festered, while, at the same time, acute pains were felt in the side.

The doctor, being satisfied that his patient was courageous enough to hear the truth, announced to him that the illness was without hope; John Baptist, far from manifesting either surprise or fear, on the contrary, accepted the news with joy. A ray of heavenly happiness shone on his countenance; he was about to quit the earth and be united with Jesus Christ! As long as the will of God desired him to work, he had

done his duty; but now that his mission was accomplished, what a happiness to die! "I hope", said he, "that I shall soon be delivered out of Egypt, and be admitted into the true Land of Promise." Though he took the prescribed remedies through obedience, he begged the Brothers not to incur further useless expenses; he desired, he said, nothing more now than to have recourse to the sovereign physician of souls, who alone could give him the relief that he desired with all his heart.

Contrary to all expectation, he was able, on the feast of St. Joseph, to ascend the holy altar and there immolate once more the August Victim to whom he was soon to be united eternally. The Brothers, seeing him at the altar, believed that a miracle had restored to them their father. But the deception was only all the more bitter when they beheld the holy patient reduced to the weakness of the previous days. While awaiting the fatal end, they had but to receive his last counsels.

On Monday of Holy Week, April 3rd, John Baptist, whilst in the full possession of his mental faculties, made his last testament; it is an act of humility and faith, in which the holy founder of the Institute recommends his Brothers: "to be entirely submissive to the Church, to acquit themselves of their several duties with zeal and great disinterestedness, and to be intimately united among themselves and blindly obedient to their superiors."

The next day, Holy Tuesday, M. Du Jarrier-Bresnard, parish-priest of Saint-Sever, came to visit and exhort him. And when he told the Saint that his end was imminent: "I know it", said the Servant of God calmly, "and I submit in all things to God's holy will.

My lot is in His hands; may His will be done." The holy patient asked the Viaticum for Holy Wednesday. His faith inspired him to rise to receive his Master, and he was vested with a surplice and stole. As soon as he heard the bell that announced the approach of the Most Blessed Sacrament, he, to the great surprise of all present, fell on his knees, and, gathering what little strength he had, he prostrated himself before his God. This movement of fervour was so prompt, that the assistants were deceived, and some of them seemed surprised that Holy Communion under the form of Viaticum, was given to one who appeared to be full of vigour.

The Saint, who was not mistaken with regard to his state, asked that he might receive the sacrament of Extreme Unction on the following morning, Holy Thursday: and it was also the pastor of Saint-Sever who administered the sacrament of the dying to him. After this he entered into a state of profound recollection and silence which continued during seven hours, occupied only with the graces God had just bestowed on him. In the afternoon, being pressed with questions by those of his children who stood around his bed, he lent himself to all their desires, and gave each the advice he needed. To some of them he revealed the most hidden secrets of their hearts.

Towards evening, his voice grew weak and speaking became more difficult. Seeing that he was near his agony, the Brothers threw themselves on their knees to receive his last blessing. Brother Barthélemy, in the name of all, begged him to bless not only those present but also all the Brothers of the Institute. "May God bless you all," said he. Then he added: "If you wish to persevere and die in your vocation, never have any

intercourse with people of the world ; for, little by little, you will acquire a taste for their habits and be drawn into conversation with them to such an extent, that through policy you will no longer be able to refrain from applauding their language, however pernicious it may be; this will lead you into unfaithfulness; and being no longer faithful in observing your Rules, you will grow disgusted with your vocation, and finally you will abandon it. ” These words were expressed in a firm tone, and required such an effort that a cold sweat interrupted him and he entered into an agony. From midnight till two o'clock, he was a prey to the painful anguish of the last struggle. About two o'clock, seeing that there was an instant of relief, Brother Barthélemy suggested to him some pious thoughts, and helped him to recite the prayer *Maria, mater gratiæ*, which he loved to say with the community every night. He then asked him if he accepted with joy the pains he was suffering. “ Yes ”, replied the Saint, “ I adore in all things the designs of God in my regard. ”

These were his last words, and his whole life was summarized in them. His agony recommenced at three o'clock, and, notwithstanding the struggles of the last moment, his countenance never for a moment lost its usual calmness and confidence. At four o'clock, the Saint made an effort to rise and go to meet some one. He was going to meet Our Lord Himself ; for, having joined his hands and raised his eyes to heaven, he expired. It was Good-Friday, April 7th 1719. He was sixty-eight years of age, less twenty-three days.

The news of his death spread quickly next morning through Saint-Sever and Rouen. The sad announcement elicited lively sentiments of regret among the

people, which showed what esteem and love they had for the founder of the Brothers. The only thing heard in Rouen that morning was : " He was a saint, the Saint is dead. " The clergy and nobility, the rich and poor, all desired to take a last look at the mortal remains, and to offer at his funeral couch, together with a last prayer, a testimony of respect and gratitude.

While the crowds, in serried ranks, passed before the catafalque, there was a strife for the objects that belonged to him as for precious relics. From all the towns in which the Brothers were employed, there came the most sincere and consoling sympathies to alleviate the bitterness of the sorrow that they felt at Saint-Yon.

The Saint's body was at first interred in the chapel of Sainte-Susanne in the church of Saint-Sever, but was transferred to the chapel of Saint-Yon in 1734. The holiness of the Servant of God was soon manifested by miracles at his tomb, and, since 1888, the date of his Beatification, these precious relics, preserved at Rouen, receive the honours they merit in the chapel of the Brother's boarding school ¹.

¹ The holy relics of St. John Baptist De La Salle were transferred in 1904 from Rouen to the chapel of the Mother-House, established at Lembecq-lez-Hal, Belgium.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN

INTRODUCTION

After having followed John Baptist De La Salle through all the thrilling incidents of his long career, it will be a pleasure for us to arrest our steps for a while, and fix our gaze upon this noble and sympathetic man, in order that we may more deeply engrave his image on our minds. If we carefully examine the gifts of nature and grace which he had received from God, we shall distinguish in him the man, the Christian, the priest and the founder of a Religious Order. These elements in him were not separated, which would have caused him to act sometimes as a man and at other times as a Christian; on the contrary, these natural and supernatural gifts were so wonderfully blended in the same person, that all his words were equally stamped with the mark of reason and faith, and all his actions, without losing the characteristic imprint of his nature, proceeded from the spirit of God. But our mind, being too weak to take in at a single glance the entire being,

succeeds in knowing it only by analyzing its component parts.

In the first place, we shall examine what kind of man John Baptist De La Salle was ; because his natural qualities to which grace adapted its gifts, had a profound influence on his whole life. If it has pleased God, for the better display of His power, sometimes to achieve great things by means of instruments humanly speaking worthless, he has, on the other hand, often chosen highly gifted natures to accomplish His most important designs. This choice is, on His part, no more than the exercise of pure logic ; for could we possibly conceive that He would bestow His highest gifts on certain natures, in order afterwards to reject them ? Is it not just and proper that, if they remain faithful, they become His chief instruments of action on the world ? What rich and powerful natures were St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius, St. Francis of Sales and St. Vincent De Paul ! Is it not a fact that these great Saints were also great men, and that God had proportioned their natural gifts to the importance of their supernatural mission ?

John Baptist De La Salle belonged not only to the family of great Saints, but also to the family of great men. God had so fashioned his human nature that he might, under the action of grace, bring to a satisfactory end the providential work that absorbed his whole life. And, for this reason, we shall begin by considering in him the gifts of nature, which are, not less than supernatural gifts, a benefit of God.

PHYSICAL PORTRAIT

John Baptist De La Salle's stature was a little over the average. In his youth, his constitution was very delicate; but, with riper age, it became vigorous enough, so that he was able to endure rude macerations and penances, as well as the most painful privations. His bearing was serious, but without stiffness, which announced the man of good breeding and family. He held his head inclined a little forward. His countenance, fair at first, assumed a tinge of colour in time, bordering on swarthy, owing to his many fatigues and weary journeys, and yet it always presented those delicate lines that expressed affability; his forehead was lofty, and he possessed an abundance of hair which was prematurely whitened by cares rather than by age; the nose was regular, the lips slightly projecting, and the mouth always had an amiable smile. Bright eyes, almost blue, a candid and profound look animated this countenance, so well adapted exteriorly to reflect his interior holiness.

Standing in front of the faithful portrait that has been left us by Pierre Léger, and which has been exactly reproduced at the head of this book, we feel ourselves instinctively attracted with love for the Saint: there is so much delicacy and distinction in these lines, so much nobleness in the attitude, such a captivating charm in this half-formed smile and in the sweet calm that covers his countenance! And at the same time that lively look, so firm and yet so good, that speaks so eloquently even

when the lips are silent, goes to the depths of your soul like an arrow, paternally examines your thoughts and wishes, and sheds on you, with all the tenderness of his heart, the expressions of the hope that you caused him to conceive of you, or the anxiety you may have given him.

From this resulted that powerful influence which he ever exercised over souls. In the classes, the children had as much love as respect for him ; they went to him quite naturally ; even the most timid approached him ; and those who were the least gifted, did not feel humiliated in his presence : the very benevolence of his countenance helped to fix his lessons in the minds of all. He had not less ascendancy over the young men who were drawn by vocation to the Institute ; his manners, always gracious, tempered for them the first impressions of an austere Rule, and his look, the image of paternal kindness, brought light and peace to their troubled souls. And those turbulent and indocile youths who were handed over to him by disconsolate and alarmed parents, were at once seized by his kind and noble appearance ; who shall tell us the number of souls that were won and converted by the exterior virtue that emanated from him ?

These exterior gifts were however only the radiance of profound qualities which gave to his mind and will their power and value.

THE QUALITIES OF HIS MIND

If the intellectual gifts of John Baptist De La Salle seemed to be effaced by the lustre of his moral virtues,

we must not, on this account, conclude that they were only ordinary and without influence on the great works that he accomplished. On the contrary, the natural gifts of his mind had so large a part in whatever he undertook, and so powerfully concurred in its success, that it is but simple justice to make them conspicuous.

His love of books manifested itself from early childhood, and urged him on to serious studies. At the University of Rheims, where he received a high literary education, he was ranked among the most brilliant of the students, and the hopes which were already entertained of him inclined the aged chancellor Dozet to resign his canonry in his favour. After having completed an extensive course of humanities, such as were taught in the seventeenth century, he went to Paris to follow the courses of theology that were there given by the most eminent professors that France possessed at that period : while he was a student at Saint-Sulpice, he was admitted among the elite group that followed the theological course at the Sorbonne. When, after a short time, he was recalled to Rheims by the imperious necessities of family duties, he did not neglect his studies, even in the midst of distractions caused by the preoccupations of business, for he successfully underwent the examinations for the degree of Master of Arts and that of Doctor in Theology. Though very learned, yet he was never satisfied with the amount of knowledge he had acquired, and intellectual work was full of attraction for him to the end of his life. He was then attracted to the purely religious sciences by his tastes and the duties of his state : he lived chiefly with the Fathers, the theologians and the mystics ; by this daily intercourse with books, his cultivated mind preserved

its fruitful activity, which produced so many useful works.

By a providential disposition, the bent of his mind was in harmony with his vocation. He did not possess the exuberant imagination of the poet, though his style does not lack colour. Neither had he the fiery enthusiasm of the orator, though his discourses, such as they have been handed down to us by his biographer, are not wanting either in vigour or in warmth. He was particularly noted for his power of penetration and good sense; this penetration enabled him justly to appreciate all things and so gave him such vividly clear expressions of his ideas; this good sense preserved him from any error in his thoughts or exaggeration in his words; it guided him with security in his enterprises, enabled him to discover the errors of the then existing methods of teaching, and, at the same time, revealed to him the means to remedy them. If these qualities are not such as throw lustre in literature, they possess at least the advantage of giving a solid foundation to lasting works, and they should be the fortunate adjunct of all men of action. And it is because John Baptist was gifted in an eminent degree with this power of penetration and equilibrium of mind, that the creations of his genius have resisted the test of time, and been so invariably successful.

The whole life of the founder of the Brothers was enlightened and governed by calm deliberation, which resulted from the correctness of his ideas and from the prudence that this sound judgment produced in him. Though naturally quick and penetrating, and able to see at a glance into the depths of men and things, yet he

was too prudent to be precipitate, too sensible not to know that a wise delay enlightens decisions and permits us to seize the most favourable opportunities of success. If, before acting, he always took time to reflect in meditation and to consult competent men, it was not to strengthen his courage against hesitation, but to submit his ideas to the control of the judgment of others. His intelligence and humility seem to dispute for the prize in this wise conduct. Examples of this mode of acting, are met with at each step of his long career. In his first interview with Adrian Nyel, he clearly saw how he must proceed in order to avoid the touchiness of the schoolmasters, and of the town council; nevertheless, he assembled in his house the men best qualified to give him advice, he exposed to them his sentiments and acted only after having obtained their approval. When he saw that his work required that the masters should live in his house, that he should resign his canonry, that it would be necessary to despoil himself of his rich patrimony, he still sought advice, and was always ready to sacrifice his personal views to the counsel of those whom he esteemed more enlightened than himself. Even in the writing of his Rules, he submitted to members of different Religious Orders, the points that he thought of serious importance. While he was a very sure and prudent adviser to those who consulted him, he himself would not undertake anything without having had recourse to the wisdom of others.

Thanks to this prudent course, he displayed uncommon ability in the management of affairs. While still a young priest, he most happily succeeded in arranging the conditions of the religious of the *Holy Child Jesus*, by obtaining Letters Patent for them. If he

was never guilty of those acts of imprudence which uselessly shock men and compromise good works, it was because he was condescending without being weak, and knew how to impose his will without being troublesome. He never, through lack of tact, widened the impassable gap that lay between him and his adversaries.

Cutting words and unkind behaviour were repaid with kindness and devotedness : this way of acting was as reasonable as it was Christian, and was the fruit of a will that was master of itself, and at the same time the act of a man who foresaw the painful consequences of even the most justifiable replies. This clear-sightedness of the pilot, who knew the sea, enabled him to steer the frail bark of the Institute, through innumerable dangers and under the attacks of the most furious tempests.

Often, however, such well-balanced minds lack boldness in conception ; by remaining too much attached to the traditional forms of action, they lessen by routine the powers that initiative would have greatly developed. It was not thus with John Baptist De La Salle, for, while profiting by the precious lessons of the past, which he respected, he still had enough of independent judgment to be, in the good sense of the word, an innovator. The rare competency which he had acquired in the questions which occupied him for more than forty years, made an eminent educator of him, and gave him the right to follow out the inspirations of his genius in a field that had as yet been very little explored. He formed such a correct judgment of all that he examined, that his creations have received from time the sanction of durability, and have served as guides and models to the

many praiseworthy undertakings in favour of youth since his days.

If he was not the creator of primary education, since the *petites écoles* were in existence before his time, he was incontestably its organizer and lawgiver. He unreservedly established the gratuitousness of the schools intended for the people, and the charity schools, which before his time were so scarce and so neglected, now began to multiply and flourish. As soon as he took charge of a school, he arranged and organized it according to the order and method that prevailed in his mind. With him, those crowds of children who frequented the schools, settled down at once to order and work: he divided them into groups, and gave a master to each; according to their proficiency, the pupils of each group were subclassified into three sections by the master, and each section worked separately. But all the pupils of the same section were obliged to follow the same lesson; this new method of simultaneous teaching awakened interest and produced emulation and progress. Instead of wasting their youthful years reading the Latin language which they would never learn, and of which they did not understand a single word, the children of the poor began to learn to read their mother-tongue, with which of course they were familiar. By means of this intelligent discipline, silence was maintained in the class, and application became possible, progress soon became evident, and the children, now better governed, were less insolent in the streets and more obedient at home: the well ordered school moralized those little beings, who would otherwise have been corrupted, and, perhaps, would have become dangerous criminals by their roaming through the streets.

John Baptist had the intuition of continuation schools, and his Sunday school, where he received two or three hundred apprentices and working boys, was the pioneer of our modern *patronages*. But, from the start, this undertaking, somewhat original at the time, took the character of usefulness, which assured its success, and without which our present attempts will have only partial results. The Sunday school not only protected the young men from the dangers of the streets, and the wicked suggestions of idleness, but also completed their religious instruction as well as their intellectual and professional education. To moralizing recreation and sanctifying religious exercises, it added practical studies capable of humanly interesting and attracting young men, who had to work to earn their living.

The *pensionnats d'enseignement moderne* do not prove in John Baptist De La Salle less sagacity. He understood that the ancient languages were useless for the middle classes of society, and that the *petites écoles* were not sufficient. He opened a boarding school at Saint-Yon, near Rouen, in which the instruction was both theoretical and practical; sufficiently theoretical to assure a sound liberal education for mind and heart, and practical enough to prepare young men of the working class for their respective callings. The outlines of the much sought-for modern intermediate teaching were traced by John Baptist De La Salle's own hand.

His organization of the training school for lay masters, without his having had any precedent to guide him, may be taken as a model for our present-day training colleges. He not only taught the young masters the different branches and gave them special instruction

in pedagogy, but he was also careful to have, at Rheims and Paris, a school for children which would serve as a practising school for the normal students. In this way, the young teachers learned the art of their profession under the eyes of a clever mentor: this fertile idea, which was quite original in the seventeenth century, has not, even in our own times, become commonplace.

The creation of his Institute was naturally his masterpiece. In this powerful and admirably constructed organism, life circulates abundantly and freely through nearly twenty thousand members scattered throughout the whole world. The Rules of the Society, the fruit both of long meditations and of forty years' experience, are so foreseeing and so pliant, that it has not been necessary to remodel them, and they are not less adapted to the requirements of our time than they were to that of Louis XIV.

All these works, of which the history of education in France should be proud, do honour to the educational genius of John Baptist De La Salle. His fertile mind, always happy in its conceptions, has left its faithful impress on all the books which his zeal for the schools dictated to him. All his writings, like his whole life, have but one object, education: masters and pupils are the only ones for whom he writes.

He addresses himself, however, principally to the Brothers, these privileged men, whom God had associated in his work and life. Not content with having instructed them during their novitiate, and in the annual retreats and visits, he follows them into their communities and schools, and by his letters and books becomes their fellow-worker. His letters, of which only a few

have been preserved, are generally short, precise, rich in practical counsels, and full of the spirit of God. As he was convinced that piety is the guardian of virtue and the food of zeal, he multiplied for this purpose, the books that would be capable of keeping this religious spirit of the Brothers full of life and vigour: the works include instructions and prayers for Holy Mass, Confession and Communion; short treatises on Christian perfection grouped under the title of *Collection of short Treatises*; Explanation of the Method of mental Prayer; Meditations for Sundays and Feasts, as well as for the time of the retreat, in which the masters can learn how to unite their obligations as Christians with their duties as teachers.

This is not all; for his foreseeing mind follows his disciples even into their classes. There, nothing is left to caprice or indecision; by his book on the "Management of the Schools", which is at once so simple and original, so full of ingenious observations and precious lessons, he guides the young master as by the hand, and initiates him in the delicate art of training children. For the use of the children, he composes *a b c* books and spelling books, in which his practical mind is revealed in the smallest details; his other works for the pupils are a Treatise on Politeness, in which good manners are taught as Christian virtues; and the *Duties of a Christian*, an abridged theology, in which the children, while learning to read, learn their religion at the same time.

All these books, written in very correct style and recalling the classic period, and without pretension to literary research, are distinguished for the clearness of the ideas, the wisdom of the observations, as well as

for the seasonableness of the counsels and the perfectly good sense of the methods they contain, so that John Baptist De La Salle appears therein, such as he was in all his actions, clear-headed, an observer, practical, always thoughtful, thoroughly versed in theology and asceticism, bold in initiative, and successful in all that concerned education.

HIS MORAL CHARACTER

Character is the expression of the moral man, the exterior sign of his interior worth, the stamp that impresses its image on a man and on his works. There are indifferent characters that leave no trace on what they touch. Among the well-marked characters, there are two that are easily distinguished, according as their lines are harmonious or discordant: the former are noble and beautiful, the latter, base and despicable. John Baptist De La Salle's was certainly not insignificant, for its outlines stood out in strong relief: he presented in all his words and actions an air of nobleness and elevation, which never contradicted themselves. It is true that nature and grace had united to prepare its elements; but free will, which gives character its special stamp, knew how to utilize in the best possible manner the gifts he had received from God.

Honesty, that virtue of prime importance, and without which no honourable man would dare to put himself before the public, had attained such a degree of delicacy in John Baptist, that he would not have

allowed a shadow, however light it might appear, to overhang and darken his crystal-like transparent soul. It was altogether too little for him simply to avoid the appearance of untruthfulness, not to fail in an engagement, not to practise those acts of duplicity and cunning by which sincerity too often makes vain efforts to escape unsullied; he regarded it as an imperious duty to put his thoughts, words and actions into perfect accord, and would expose himself to serious losses rather than lie to his conscience. As he was incapable of exhibiting feelings and sentiments which he did not possess, so, on the other hand, he never hid those thoughts which circumstances required to be exposed to the light. Though he observed the most prudent reserve in all things, human respect never swayed his conduct. With his early education, sincerity entered and formed as it were a constituent part of his moral nature: whence sprang that almost unlimited confidence he inspired in all those who had any intercourse with him.

It was particularly in the struggle against Jansenism that his loyalty was seen to shine forth. When he was in Paris, he could have obtained the favour of the Cardinal De Noailles, who esteemed him, by dissimulating his open opposition to the innovators; but he took very good care not to give an erroneous idea of his sentiments: by his not visiting the Archbishop in 1715, he took a very significant attitude which, without being offensive, was equal to a declaration of his feelings. As soon as he discovered that his benefactors at Marseilles, in 1713, had proposed to draw him into the revolt, he immediately broke with them, though by so doing, he clearly saw that his sincerity would let loose

upon him and his works a furious tempest. It was entirely repugnant to his nature to obtain peace and prosperity by means of equivocation. When he learned, just a few months previous to his death, that his name had been inscribed on the list of the appellants by the Bishop of Boulogne, he showed himself not less categorical; he protested his absolute submission to the Bull *Unigenitus*, with all his might, though to do so, he was obliged to break the silence in which his humility loved to hide itself. Such was his love of truth and his horror of disguise, that he would have sacrificed his life and his works rather than fail in uprightness. There never was a humiliation more unjust or one more keenly felt than that to which he was subjected, when he heard from the lips of a priest whom he greatly respected, these words: "You are a liar, Sir." God permitted such an affront because He knew what profit His servant would draw from it.

It is the same delicacy which respects truth under the name of sincerity, and the goods of one's neighbour under that of honesty; disguised truth and all insincere proceedings that border on injustice are the indices of a low education. John Baptist was not less upright in business affairs than in the manifestation of his sentiments.

Could it be conceived that this man who had so courageously renounced his honourable prebend and distributed his rich patrimony to the poor would be suspected of loving money? And if he was disinterested enough to renounce all legitimate rights, and to have no other endowment for his community than total abandonment to Providence, should he not on all occasions

give marks of the most complete disengagement from all earthly things? He could scarcely speak about payment for his Brothers. Of course he was obliged by the absolute necessities of life to treat of pecuniary questions. But the sum of three hundred *livres* which he asked as the salary of each Brother was barely enough to support a poor man. And yet, he was often satisfied with much less. "You know we are not exacting as to the conditions," he wrote to Rouen. Certainly, he was not exacting; and even in the time of the famine, and when hunger made itself felt, he would only go timidly to claim the sums that were due. If such reserve in the bashful poor sometimes betrays the high spirit of the nobleman, it was, in John Baptist, but the effect of disinterestedness.

He clearly showed, in certain disagreements, that the bent of his heart was not towards money; for, rather than go to law with the disputants, he preferred to forego the claims that he could have justly made. At Rethel, he abandoned to carping heirs certain securities that had been left him by charitable persons for the use of his schools; and, again, in 1703, when an important legacy on which he counted to buy the Grand'Maison, had been turned to other purposes, he never uttered a complaint to any one; and if the act of infidelity of Nicolas Vuyart was a cruel blow to his tender heart, it was not on account of the money of which he had been despoiled, but because this treason involved for him the loss of one of his most beloved disciples. And yet God, in His mysterious and providential ways of acting with His saints, permitted that a man so disinterested as John Baptist was, should be condemned by human tribunals "for having extorted

money by suborning a minor." John Baptist, who was not at this time in Paris, kept silence as if he had been justly convicted; and when, five years later, restitution of the five thousand two hundred *livres* of which he had been deprived by the strange judgment of the Châtelet, was made, far from being in a hurry to secure his rights, all was nearly lost by a new sentiment of delicacy; for, being named Superior of the Brothers in the document which should be signed by him, he would have rejected the offered sum, rather than receive it under a title that he had renounced six months before.

With this virtue of probity is connected that of discretion, which inspires the same respect for the secrets and reputation of our neighbour, as we have for his temporal possessions. There was never noticed in John Baptist De La Salle that intemperance of language which offends good breeding even more than it does charity, and which is a proof in certain persons, who are otherwise pious, of the lack of good education. He was always so discreet in his words that never, not even inadvertently, did he divulge the least secret; the numerous confidences of which he was made the guardian remained eternally buried in the depths of his own heart; for, as much as he was faithful in remembering in God's holy presence the souls that had confided themselves to him, so much did he seem to have forgotten them, when speaking to men. Therefore with what ease the conscience was laid open to him! "He was so reserved in his conversation", says his biographer, "so circumspect in his words, so attentive to speak to the point, so exact in explaining himself in few words, so modest in the tone and manner of giving his advice, that one could easily see that he practised to

the letter this maxim inspired by the Saints, “ to weigh one’s words, and not utter any that one should wish to recall after having spoken it. ” Discretion was so dear to him, that, by his Rules, he made it a part of the Brothers’ conduct. “ No Brother ”, says he, “ shall speak of the affairs of the house wherein he lives, nor of the conduct of any person; if any one should speak to him of one or the other, or question him thereon, he shall say that he may not answer such questions, and that the person must address himself to the Brother Director. ”

He seemed to possess these virtues as part of his very nature, and yet he never lost any of their supernatural merit before God; thanks to the excellent education he had received in his family, he found no difficulty in their practice : they formed part of that correct behaviour and politeness to which he had been trained from his very childhood. In him, as in St. Francis De Sales, the most refined manners, by being the ornament and exterior attraction in the man, were the priest’s recommendation and gained for him every one’s good will and respect. He always observed, with the best taste of gracefulness and distinction, those rules of propriety which he has laid down in a truly Christian book : it was never better seen than in his own person that politeness is the pure reflection of mortification and charity.

He made to himself a law of the most inviolable modesty, in order never to offend any one either by his behaviour, or words, or actions. His clothes, however poor they might be, were neither torn nor dirty; his hair, while he conformed to the clerical regu-

lation, presented neither too much care nor negligence. His gait was neither careless nor affected; ease and gravity gave all his movements their perfect gracefulness. He exercised such vigilance over his words, that he was neither dull nor laconic in conversation, nor wearisome by long and fastidious discourses; he never offended any one by cutting remarks or indiscreet allusions. When obliged to reprimand, he chose the most fitting moment, and employed the most insinuating tone, so as not to irritate by imprudent observations the wound he wished to cure. In his relations with others, he always observed this tact of the well-bred man: in spite of his love of solitude, he never omitted visits of politeness or of gratitude; even when he knew that he should be received with cold reserve, he still acquitted himself of his duty. If he met so many enemies and persecutors in his career, he never provoked them by lack of gentlemanly deference.

This same delicacy was not always meted out to him; but he pushed his mortification so far as to support without bitterness, if not without sensitiveness, and with perfect equanimity of temper, the impoliteness and rudeness, not to say outrages, which he had to suffer. If, under similar circumstances, worldly politeness imposes a bearing which at least saves appearances, John Baptist's humility raised his good manners to the height of a Christian virtue. To recount here the thousand occasions of mortification that put his patience to the test, would require to go over the history of his whole life.

Good education goes further still. It is not content with refraining from offending others or showing coldness for them; it invites the soul to forget itself and

to make the first advances of affability. It makes the features shine with attractive kindness; it inspires our words with that pleasing charm which irresistibly gains the heart; it makes one obliging and attentive; in a word, it brings peace, comfort and happiness to souls. John Baptist De La Salle's features well reflect that goodness, condescension and inclination to confer happiness which is the sweet perfume of Christian politeness; for his benevolent traits are the reflections of a soul that loves and thinks of nothing else than giving itself.

These attractive qualities were neither affected nor disguised; they came from a heart in which their roots were deeply fixed. It is advisedly we say from the heart; for John Baptist could have repeated with St. Augustine: "Love is the force that draws me; wherever I go, I am impelled by love." It is true that his heart did not always reveal itself at the first approach. John Baptist, who was a man of punctilious exactness, of tenacity in his decisions, invincible in adversity, a clever and far-seeing organizer, seemed to have deadened all sensibility under the weight of administrative preoccupations. Besides, that sensibility, such as our sickly generation conceives and practises, was not congenial to either the nature of his temper or the manners of his time. But if you lay your hand, though ever so lightly, on that breast, torn by the hairshirt and the sharp points of the iron chain, you will feel the heart of a man beating within.

Would you wish to know what flowers hide the most honey at the bottom of their cups? Follow the bees to the fields, for instinctively they will go straight to the source of their wealth. Look for no other sign

to discover kind hearted men; mark the direction in which men's sympathies go, follow them, and be certain that they go directly to the heart of him that loves. If John Baptist had been wanting in tenderness of heart, he would never have received those numberless proofs of warm and devoted sympathy which he did. How he was loved by his first Brothers, Jean François, Nicolas Bourlette and others, who wore themselves out by following him in the paths of divine love and Christian perfection! How those Brothers of the Grand'Maison cherished him, who pressed round him and maintained him in his office of superior, without ever thinking that they were braving the authority of the Archbishop! Was it not their love that burst forth in those loud and determined protestations which the pastor of Villiers so feelingly recorded: "And they commenced to enumerate all his qualities and to say, among other things, that he was kind and gentle to others, but severe for himself; that he commanded nothing which he would not and did not himself do, and it was impossible to give them one who could equal him, either in the art of governing or in all his other excellent virtues and qualities." If they did not always act with the greatest delicacy towards him, or always remain faithful to him, yet, in spite of all this, they never ceased to love him; even the most unfaithful, like the prodigal son, never doubting his affection, would return confidently to him and beg readmission into the Institute. The school children also were all drawn to him in whom, by the sweetness of his looks and words, they recognized a true father. It was his kind heart that won those sinners and those wayward youths, upon whom the arguments and threats of

others had no effect; he succeeded where others failed, because his manner was not that of one who subdues but of one who captivates. This current of sympathy followed him even to his tomb; the love of his children has jealously watched over his memory and has illuminated his brow with the halo of the Saints.

The secret virtue that emanated from him and revealed his heart, was goodness. This man, at first view, apparently austere and hard, was kind; one felt that he was good, therefore he was loved. He always had kind thoughts, and always believed in the good faith and intentions of his neighbours. He was never worried either by jealousy or oversensitiveness; his self-love was never saddened by the good accomplished by others, but, quite the contrary, it gladdened his apostolic heart; and he was the first to congratulate the successful workers; whenever any one failed in respect to him, instead of being offended by the sharp words or the unkind behaviour, he made himself more obliging and courteous to those who had thus forgotten themselves. Above all things, he showed the kindness of his heart in his generosity. What did he not sacrifice for the love of souls? He renounced his fortune to become like his Brothers; he gave the whole of his time for forty years to the work of the schools; he exhausted his strength in unremitting labours and in merciless mortifications. In imitation of St. Paul, he expended all his resources and immolated himself for souls. If lofty conceptions are the apanage of powerful minds, the generous giving of one's self and the making of heroic sacrifices are the characteristics of great souls. We willingly avow, however, that all John Baptist De La Salle's actions were characterized by his strength of

will. But, though this will power was very strong in him, yet it never concealed the heart, which was its source and aliment. Love was the motive power that caused him to undertake so many works; for, according to Holy Writ, "Love is strong as death."

What is still more astonishing, and what appears the most heroic in the life of the Servant of God, is the wonderful consistency of his thoughts, and the invincible perseverance which he brought to their realization. A simple transitory act of courage is within the reach of every generous man; but to keep one's self for forty years on the same path, strewn with all kinds of obstacles, and to advance therein without ever faltering, shows that such a man must have possessed uncommon firmness of will. On several occasions, John Baptist humbly declared that, if he had known at the beginning how far he would be drawn, and to what martyrdom he was devoting himself, he should never have undertaken the work of the schools. But God developed in him, in proportion as it was required, that strength which he had not at first, so that his magnanimity was never unequal to the task.

It would seem that each day brought him some new disappointment on the part of his Brothers; sometimes they were decimated by sickness, sometimes cast down with discouragement, or wearied with their religious practices; at other times some would abandon their schools at the moment when their presence was the most necessary; several of those upon whom he had built the greatest hopes betrayed him and turned against him. All this mattered little to him personally. He pitied the deserters, and together with those who remained faithful, he courageously continued the work

God had given him to do. Sometimes ecclesiastical authorities placed difficulties in his way, and even those whom he considered protectors, often turned persecutors; rival masters madly contrived his ruin by sacking his schools, and by obtaining from the civil authorities his condemnation. Even all this availed nothing! He hoped against all hope, and, as long as he had the breath of life, he continued to work for the children of the poor. Who shall enumerate all the moments of harrowing anguish in his long and painful existence! Yet, in spite of all these difficulties and obstacles, John Baptist never deviated for an instant from what he considered his path of duty. When he was away in the South, and while his calumniators tried to convince the Brothers of the North that he had deserted them, he was living and working only for his Brothers and among them. If after the violent persecution at Marseilles he hesitated for a moment, he soon found himself on the right path again, after having prayed in his dear solitude of the Sainte-Baume.

He was as impregnable as a wall of brass before all who attacked his works or tried to modify his Rules. What more firm and logical than his Memorial to M. Baudrand on the Brothers' dress! The Bishop of Chartres, Godet Des Marais, counted in vain on the influence of his friendship to transform the Constitutions of the Institute; the founder listened respectfully, but continued to maintain the practices of which long experience had shown him the necessity. M. De La Chéty, who considered him weak because he was kind, thought it opportune to meddle with the government of the Brothers; the Saint preserved his usual calm attitude, conceded nothing, and preserved his community, if not

from all anxiety, at least from all dangerous innovations.

While, in general, his charity rendered him condescending, yet when there was question of principle, he was unyielding; he would never consent to send a Brother alone, nor admit that the Brothers should attend to works foreign to their vocation, such as fill the office of clerics or of sacristans in the parish churches of their schools; he insisted that the pupils should be admitted gratuitously to the schools, he guaranteed community life for the Brothers by prescribing solitude and exercises of piety for them.

The Rules which he composed bear the stamp of this firmness, and everything they contain is ordered with the view of preserving and developing the strength of the soul. By faithfully observing them, not as though they were idle formalities but as exercises of the moral life, the Brothers will form their character on that of their father, and will contract habits of regularity, mortification and constant application by which their ministry will be benefited.

If now, instead of considering the superior, we fix our gaze on the private life of the man, we shall witness the same force and logic in the acts of the will. He was severe on his senses, and this austerity continued all his life; he was given to long prayers, and he never departed from this practice; the inclination he had for the lowest place remained with him to the end. His inviolable fidelity to God and to his conscience secretly prepared him for that religious tenacity which he brought to the government of his works.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHRISTIAN

A man is never more a man than when he is a good Christian, and, we are pleased to say it, if John Baptist De La Salle presented such noble and regular characteristics, it was because grace, in him, had admirably repaired and transformed human nature. If it is true that all virtues are Christian, because no good act is accomplished in us without the aid of grace, there are some, however, that are more properly Christian virtues, either because they have an object and a principle exclusively supernatural, or because they have been particularly taught us by Jesus Christ. Of this class are the virtues that prompt and sustain the ascension of the soul to God, such as faith, hope, charity and religion; and those others that facilitate our onward march, by detaching us from earthly goods and ties, sensual pleasures and self-will. By the practice of them, our Saint attained the summit of Christian perfection.

HIS FAITH AND LIFE OF FAITH

Faith is a belief and a principle of life : a belief, by which our mind gives its adhesion to all the revealed truths proposed by the Church ; a principle of life, by which our soul receives from God the supernatural graces that purify our intentions and sanctify our actions. Faith must be pure, and the spirit of faith must be active and practical. Such is the double point of view under which the faith of John Baptist De La Salle is presented to us.

He watched with jealous zeal over the integrity of his faith, and his watchful solicitude guarded his community from all the occasions that might have endangered the faith of the Brothers. He was chiefly on his guard against the errors of Quietism and Jansenism, which at the end of the seventeenth century excited men's minds and put such divisions among them.

An ecclesiastic called his attention one day to a sentence in the Brothers' prayers which appeared to savour of quietism : " I protest to Thee, O my God, that I would not cease to love Thee, even should there be no other life after this to hope for. " Though the observation was groundless, as the words in question had no connection whatever with the condemned propositions in the book of the *Maximes des Saints*, yet John Baptist modified the prayer, so much did he take to heart that there should be no suspicion of his faith or of his perfect submission to the Church.

He had above all to be on his guard against Jansenism.

For the abettors of this subtle heresy, which glided craftily into souls under the cover of austere discipline, and had already gained many a partisan among the clergy, tried to make it penetrate the soul of John Baptist also, and to win over to their party a man that was equally conspicuous for the holiness of his life and the fruitfulness of his apostolate. But he did not allow himself to be trapped in the snares that had been cunningly set for him; he indignantly scorned the offers of money that were made him on condition of his joining the Jansenist party; he permitted the ruin of his novitiate at Marseilles rather than keep it up at the price of a suspicion being entertained with regard to the purity of his faith. In presence of the decisions of the Church, a respectful silence seemed to him to be entirely insufficient; so, when the Bull *Unigenitus* appeared, he publicly gave his adhesion to the Pope's word. And as he had the sorrow to see his brother, the Canon Louis De La Salle, join the ranks of the appellants, he broke off all intercourse with the refractory Canon whom he had not been able to move by his fraternal supplications.

Those who consulted him about the party they should side with in the discussions that troubled men's minds at that time, received the following simple reply: "He who is united to the Chair of Peter is of my party. By these words, St. Jerome explained that only those who are attached to the chair of St. Peter are the true party." He encouraged all who defended the Bull: "I have heard with great pleasure", he wrote to M. Gense, the chief benefactor of the schools of Calais, "of the zeal you display to defend religion, which is so much troubled at present in this kingdom; you are

very desirous, Sir, that I should unite with you for this object, since God has given me the grace to be so employed until now. I shall not fail to pray to Him very earnestly that He may deign to bless your zealous endeavours with entire success, in order that you may raise up a barrier against all the attempts of Satan to disturb the peace of the Church in these times. ”

With regard to faith, he had no rule but that of obedience to the teachings of the Church, and he impressed this principle on the minds of his disciples as a preservative against doctrinal seductions. “ Attach yourself universally to what is of faith, ” he used to say to them, “ fly from novelties, follow the traditions of the Church, receive what she receives, condemn what she condemns, approve what she approves, either by councils, or by Sovereign Pontiffs; render her prompt obedience in all things. It is she who must make the truth known to us, and we must accept it from her mouth without doubt or examination. The only thing we have to say to what she proposes is : *I believe*, without any hesitation and without the slightest doubt about it. ” “ All you have to do ”, he repeats in several of his works, “ is to try to become better, employ all your knowledge to acquit yourself well of your duties, and to become virtuous; and for the rest to say : I believe all that the Church teaches, and I submit to what she decides by the mouth of the Pope. ”

As we see, the Church was not for John Baptist a sort of abstraction, but a reality in the person of the Pope. It was for this reason that he could never admit the subterfuges that would appeal from the Pope to the Church. “ The Pope ”, he was accustomed to say, “ being the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the head of the

Church and the successor of St. Peter, has an authority that extends over the entire Church : therefore he must be regarded by all the faithful as their father. And you especially, whose duty is to teach the Christian doctrine, must honour the Pope as the holy shepherd of the flock of the Church, respect all his teachings; and it ought to be enough for you that something has come from him to be submissive to it. ”

This fidelity to the Roman faith was the Saint's preoccupation until his last hour; and in his last testament he says, speaking to the Brothers : “ And I recommend them, above all things, to be entirely submissive to the Church and especially in these unhappy times; and to give proof of this by never being at variance in anything with our Holy Father the Pope, always remembering that I have sent two Brothers to Rome to beg of God the grace that their Society may always be wholly submissive to the Holy See. ”

It was not enough for John Baptist that faith should govern his thoughts by the purity of his belief; it was, besides, the principle of life that animated him; it inspired his judgment and his words, sustained him in his works, rendered him strong in all his trials and the difficulties of his undertakings.

Through his lively faith God was sensibly present with him, and he well expressed the sentiments of his heart when he said to his disciples : “ Have you vividly represented to yourself God's omnipresence; and have you, through a sentiment of adoration, interiorly humbled yourself at the consideration of this presence? There is nothing more agreeable to a soul that loves God, than this attention to His holy presence; have

you, like David, taken your delight in this holy exercise? Through respect for the presence of the infinitely great God, have you been careful to observe suitable modesty, proportioned to some degree to His greatness? Your Rules enjoin you to adore God's holy presence in all places; have you carefully done so wherever you have been? It is true that the Saints see God face to face as He is, but we see Him here below only by faith; this view of faith gives so much pleasure and happiness to the soul that loves God, that it enjoys even in this life a foretaste of the delights of paradise. Is this the advantage that your souls enjoy?"

In this way, John Baptist saw God, not like a something in the abstract, but like a real, concrete friend, always present at his side, always living in him. He did not seek Him in the distance; to find Him, he retired, by recollection, into the interior of his heart, according to the words of Holy Writ: "The kingdom of God is within you. By faith, Christ dwells in your hearts." John Baptist also adored the holy presence in the persons with whom he conversed; the respect that he entertained for them sprang from God's presence which he recognized in them as in a tabernacle. He venerated Jesus Christ in the humblest of the Brothers as in the most exalted ecclesiastical superiors: and hence that modesty, that reserve, that deference, and that religious respect, as if he had been always in a holy place. Hence also the reason why he so earnestly insisted, both in his conferences and in his writings, that the Brothers should make themselves familiar with the holy exercise of the presence of God, which is a sovereign practice to promote advancement in perfection.

Being thus penetrated with God, John Baptist judged all things by the supernatural light of faith : he longed for what it promised, he feared what it commanded to be feared, and finally, he esteemed whatever it esteemed, and despised all that it despised. He loved poverty, because it is commended by faith ; he rejoiced in sufferings and humiliations, because faith proclaims those blessed who weep and are calumniated. " Persecutions sanctified by patience", he used to say to the Brothers, " and accepted willingly and joyfully, become dear and precious, and are the richest jewels in the crown of glory ; and those who humiliate you only help to enrich your crown. "

His instructions were impregnated with such a perfume of faith, that all the hearers were embalmed therewith. It was by faith that he enlivened all his thoughts and ideas ; and even those that were suggested by his strong, sound sense, seemed to come from heaven, so much did he clothe and enlighten them with supernatural light. It was faith that directed his enterprises. Before executing any plan, he submitted it to the test of faith, and he would then adopt it and put it into execution in so far as it would concur to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He permitted no human consideration to vitiate the intentions of his heart, and when charity made it a duty to condescend to men's wishes, he did so with the view of pleasing God alone. In the same way as he recognized God in events, and received as coming from His hands troubles and consolations, so likewise were all his works undertaken only for God. This is why his whole life was the living application of the fundamental rule he gave his Brothers : " The spirit of this Institute is a spirit of

faith, which should induce those who compose it not to look upon anything but with the eyes of faith, not to do anything but in view of God, and to attribute all to God, always entering into these sentiments of holy Job : “ The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done. ”

HIS HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD

The lively faith of John Baptist opened his heart to hope by fixing his attention on God. It gave him such profound sentiments of God's intimate presence, that his hope was less an aspiration to a distant and inaccessible object than a deep respiration of the soul in the divine atmosphere which enveloped and penetrated him. However, as he saw and possessed God only through the shadows of faith, he ardently longed for the broad daylight to behold Him face to face and to be in perfect union with Him. If he had not found the means of working for God and souls during his earthly career, life in this world would have weighed on him as a painful exile. For, apart from the cause of God and the service of his neighbour, nothing had any interest for him here below, and the sacrifice of life, so painful for the majority of men, seemed not to cost him anything.

This was well seen during the several attacks of sickness that brought him to the brink of the grave ; he preserved such tranquillity of mind, such resignation to the will of God, and he even felt and manifested such frank and serene happiness, that one was convinced

that his soul was entirely detached from this world and fixed only on heaven. He spoke enthusiastically of heaven, as the goal of his most ardent desires : “ What a happiness for the Saints”, he would say, “ to be made like to God, by the participation of His nature and perfections!... Ah! what a thrill of joy you will experience, when you shall hear those whom you shall have led, as it were by the hand, say to you at the judgment, and repeat in heaven during eternity : “ These men are the servants of the great God, who have taught us the way of salvation. ”

But it is not in the expectation of heaven that hope has its most glorious triumphs : for we well know that in heaven full justice will be done. The touchstone of hope without restriction is confidence in God even for the present time, and abandonment to His Providence for all things even those concerning terrestrial interests. Very rare, at least in practice, is the heartfelt conviction that we are in the hands of God and not in those of men, that it is God who guides us through the most apparently contradictory events, and that it is the greatest wisdom to believe in His paternal solicitude. John Baptist placed unlimited confidence in the guidance of Providence. He did not dispense himself from acting, under the pretext that God was acting for him ; for, in him, hope never favoured idleness. But when he had exhausted his personal efforts for the success of any business, then, after the example of St. Ignatius of Loyola, it was from God alone he expected the happy issue of the undertaking.

His unlimited confidence in God was the foundation and source of that wonderful tranquillity of mind which he manifested in the midst of the strangest contradic-

tions and most cruel sufferings. "By whom", asks his biographer, "was he not insulted and ridiculed, calumniated and persecuted, condemned, betrayed or abandoned? We see among his persecutors his relatives, friends, compatriots, benefactors, protectors, superiors, directors and his own children : who did not raise the stone to throw it at him, or who did not see it cast without coming to his assistance, or daring to declare themselves in his favour?" If he had not abandoned himself entirely to God's holy will, he would have a hundred times given up the perilous career in which he was engaged.

Everything seemed to thwart him : among his disciples, some deserted him, others compromised his work, others in fine, and these the best, were snapped from him by death ; the members of his family who considered themselves humiliated in him, gave him great annoyance by shunning and as it were disowning him ; he was not always understood by ecclesiastical superiors, some of them criticised his Rules and tried to modify the Constitutions of his Institute, and even went so far as to depose him from his office of superior ; his rivals raided his schools, sacked them and denounced him to the civil authorities ; the tribunals sided with his adversaries, and condemned and loaded him with odious accusations ; he was outraged by all, the people insulted him in the streets, some of his unfortunate disciples reproached him with being fitter to destroy than to build up. And he, in the midst of this torrent of trials that rolled over him, was always calm and undisturbed, not that he was enveloped in the cold passiveness of ancient stoicism, but he possessed in a sublime degree the virtue of resignation that

characterizes the sincere Christian. He one day gave this reply to a Brother who discovered to him his fears and discouragements : “ Do you believe in the Gospel ? ” And when he learned at Grenoble that very serious attacks had been made on his Institute, his only reply was : “ May God be blessed ! if it is His work , He will take care of it . ” And he was not disappointed in his hope.

Even with regard to temporal necessities, he could say that Providence never deserted him. In the beginning of his work, and when deprived of all resources, with what blind generosity he threw himself into the arms of Providence ! Following the advice of Father Barré, he sold what he possessed, and distributed the proceeds to the poor. What could be more contrary to human wisdom than this ? For, since he was wealthy, why did he not employ his riches to endow his schools ? No, he would not rely on the aid of men, he would found his work on poverty ! Is there anything more daring than this act of faith, that would construct in empty space a building that was to exist ? But there where men saw only emptiness, the eyes of faith of John Baptist saw the all-powerful hand of God, and he was convinced that he could not give a more solid foundation to his works.

This absolute dependence on God, in which he put himself from the very opening of his career, always protected him from uneasiness about temporal affairs. He did not inquire : Who will feed and clothe us ? His heavenly Father knew his wants, that sufficed. And that confidence, though it was a thousand times put to the test, never deceived him. In the period of the famine, when the richest communities had spent their

resources and were lacking the very necessities, Providence supplied the wants of his community, and he came forth from the terrible crisis without being in debt and without having lost a single Brother, though his door was always open for the poor and for those who desired to make a spiritual retreat.

How often, when they saw themselves in extreme want, were they not assisted as if by a miracle! Out of the numerous facts recorded by Blain, we will take only one, which he found written in the Memorial kept by the Brother bursar : “ I often found myself”, says the Brother, “ when in the Grand’Maison in Paris, in want of everything; at one time we had no bread, at another time no meat, or not enough for the community. Then I would go and acquaint the good father who always told me to serve up what God gave me, and His goodness would provide. And it did provide and abundantly too, for, at the end of the meal, what remained was more considerable than on the days when the portions of each had been much larger; the cook and the bursar, who had not given the half of what was necessary for more than sixty persons, looked at each other in wondering admiration, and asked each other if anybody had secretly brought the necessary food. This kind of prodigy occurred on three or four different occasions; it was noticed that at these times, the good father passed nearly the whole day in prayer. ”

The father’s confidence, especially when it was rewarded with such prodigies, entered without difficulty into the souls of his children. Besides, no other lesson came so often from his lips; he often used to say : “ The more we abandon ourselves to Providence, the more it will be attentive to let us want for nothing... Jesus Christ

has charged Himself with providing for the subsistence of those who have consecrated themselves to Him... Fear nothing my dear Brothers, God never fails those who put their confidence in Him. All things are granted to faith and perfect confidence, even miracles, when they are necessary. ”

HIS LOVE OF GOD

“ We are in this world only to love and please God. Our love of God ought to be so absolute as to love nothing but God or for God. ” On the lips of John Baptist De La Salle, these sayings were not empty, vain words, for the love of God was the supreme rule of his life, and the inspirer of all his works of zeal : the ardent love of his heart enlightened his faith and his filial confidence in God ; and his abandonment to Providence, arose from the fact of his looking up to God as his Father. And as acts, more than words, demonstrate the power of love, we should seek less in his discourses than in his life the marks of that inclination full of love, which drew him towards God.

A heart truly loves, when the object loved is ever present to the thought, when its presence is agreeable and its absence painful, when its name is often on our lips, when it governs all our actions, and especially when it enables us to face work and suffering bravely. John Baptist's love of God was such, that it took all the characteristics of a engrossing passion.

He was constantly penetrated with the thought of God : he sought God everywhere, in men and in events ;

he found Him everywhere, even in his enemies. He had such an attraction for the intimate intercourse of the heart with God, that he avoided, as much as his occupations permitted, the noisy affairs of the world and all conversation with men. His taste for solitude was not the result of misanthropy : for if John Baptist's inclination drew him into solitude, it was less to avoid men than to possess God more surely. We know that community life was very dear to him. With what care he avoided distracting visits and all useless appearance abroad ! When at home, he chose the most lonely and inconvenient room, the one which would shelter him best from the inevitable noise of even the best regulated communities. Then he would impose silence on his imagination and senses, enter into the interior of his heart, and there, in that silent and closed sanctuary he tasted God, united himself to God, and partook of the life of God.

He believed in the powerful efficacy of silence, and has left precious instructions on this subject. " Be most exact in observing silence ", he wrote to a Brother, " it is one of the chief points of regularity without which a house falls into disorder. "

" Hold silence in great esteem ", he says in the *Short Treatises*, " and observe it willingly, for it is the guardian of all virtues and an obstacle to all vices, since it prevents detraction, uncharitable, untruthful, and unbecoming language. A man who is not reserved in speech, cannot become spiritual, and be sure that a certain means of rapidly attaining perfection is to avoid sins of the tongue. " Then he adds : " Always strive to unite interior with exterior silence. Forget created things to think only of God and His holy pres-

ence." "This is the kind of silence", he wrote to a pious person, "that ought to be the portion of a soul that is really solitary and separated from the love of the world; it must be tranquil and silent, because it is the means to rise incessantly above itself; and there is nothing more dangerous for the soul than to allow itself to be turned away from this divine conversation and brought down to the level of men."

It was that he might enjoy this divine conversation that he loved to envelop himself in silence. Then his interior activity fully displayed itself, for his prayer was an exercise of the mind, the heart and the will, at the same time: he looked, but with what attention! he loved, but with what ardour! he directed his energy towards action, but with what generosity! He passed several hours each day in mental prayer, and often whole nights were consecrated to the same holy exercise; while travelling, his prayer was continuous. One day, as he was going from Rheims to Paris, he begged his companion to walk ahead a little as he was going to recite his Office; and as soon as he began to pray, he fell into a kind of rapture, while he remained standing with his face turned up in ecstasy to heaven. His companion, no longer hearing him, returned, and, pulling him by the robe, he awoke him out of his rapture; the Saint then said to him in a gentle tone of voice: "I had told you to walk on ahead."

It would be incredible that a man who spent so many hours in prayer, could have been able to realize so many important works, and direct with such minute care so many masters and schools, if we did not know that, when we pray, God works for us and with us, and the light and strength received from our contact with

God advance our affairs much better than our own feverish agitation and sterile efforts could do.

Convinced by personal experience of the efficacy of prayer, John Baptist made it the central organ of the religious life of his disciples. "The Brothers of this Institute should have a great love for the holy exercise of mental prayer, and they should look on it as the first and principal of their daily exercises, and the one which is most capable of drawing down the blessing of God on all the others." "Be all the more faithful to mental prayer", he wrote one day, "as you feel God on the one hand calling you to it, and the devil on the other making all possible efforts to turn you from it."

He loved God so purely, that he was ready to forego the sweets of mental prayer to work for His glory; for his love was as active as it was contemplative. He felt that uneasiness of heart which St. Paul felt in the midst of an idolatrous city; and if he founded so many schools and formed so many masters, and endowed the works of education with a Christian spirit, it was because it afflicted him to see the poor abandoned to ignorance and vice, and the numbers of children growing up without knowing or loving God, and because the great desire of his heart was to preserve for the God whom he loved His empire over the world and souls. Provided God was better loved by one soul more, he would have spent his time, faced perils, sacrificed his very life for this object. What encouraged and sustained him in the midst of so many cruel tribulations, and rendered him constant in the path that God had opened for him was the certitude of accomplishing the will of God, and the desire to imprint God's holy name on the

tender hearts of the children that came to him. If he was regardless of himself in trials, it was for the better defence of the causè of God.

He was accustomed to say that "one of the best means to acquire and preserve divine love, is to suffer much, and to suffer cheerfully." He endured so many tribulations, that his life was only a long tissue of sufferings. He expressed his love of sufferings, when from his heart there came forth this exclamation: "How happy one is, when one has the advantage of suffering and dying in working to gain souls to God."

It was his desire to draw all his disciples along this way of love. To those who seemed lacking courage, he said: "Does not God well deserve that you do violence to yourself for His love?" Sometimes in embracing them, he would exhort them with these words: "What! would you not wish to do that for the love of God?" "My dear Brothers", he would often repeat, "desire nothing but God, seek nothing but God, fill yourself with the spirit of God. May His love ever reign in your hearts; may He be the principle of all your intentions and the centre of all your desires."

HIS LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST

"No man cometh to the Father but by me." John Baptist had the greatest possible respect for these words of Our Lord, and to show that he did not despise them, he shunned the paths of the false mystics of his time, and resolutely took the God made man as the

only way marked out to go to God the pure spirit. The knowledge that God, by an excess of His love in taking flesh, had put Himself tangibly within our reach, made him too happy ever to think of neglecting the holy humanity of Jesus Christ. This concrete God whom men saw and heard, whom the ancient patriarchs and prophets had ardently desired, and who was adored by the Christians of all ages and of the most civilized nations as their Saviour, this " God with us " made his heart beat with a burning love, so that he was never able to speak of Him without betraying a more intense feeling of soul than when he spoke on any other subject. It was his wish that the first sound heard in the morning, in every community, and at the termination of the daily exercises should be these words : *Live Jesus in our hearts ! For ever !*

Jesus was the friend to whom he had sacrificed, or at least subordinated all others; because in his friends he saw only Jesus and was attached to them only for the sake of Jesus; and in the absence of friendship which often falls to the lot of those who govern, and this was particularly the case with John Baptist, Jesus was his faithful friend, the friend into whose heart he poured all his troubles, the friend who fills poor downcast souls with a drop of that joy without which no man can live holily. Jesus was for him a Saviour, not only by the Redemption operated on Calvary for all men, but by that personal aid which dissipates all the anguish of the mind and remedies the moral weakness of each particular soul. Jesus was by right of conquest his sovereign Lord, and to His counsels and precepts he was always obedient and devoted. Jesus was his Master, his only Master, and he, as an attentive disciple, received the

imprint of His lessons, His ideas, and His sentiments, like soft wax.

For this reason he had a respect mingled with adoration for the Gospel, which contains the words of Jesus Christ. Whatever attraction he felt for the Fathers and the great mystics, the Gospel was his favourite reading; he even desired that the Brothers should have for their use the translation of the New Testament, and read a page of it each day. And as the soul of a book, if it has one, passes into the mind and soul of the reader, he hoped, and with reason, that the assiduous reading of the Gospel would fill the minds and souls of the Brothers with the soul of Jesus, because a sovereign virtue emanates from these divine pages, which leads those whose hearts are penetrated with it to holiness. Notwithstanding their simplicity, they reveal Christ in such radiant beauty and superhuman transcendency, that the mind, attracted by His grandeur, prostrates itself, and cries out in a transport of faith: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." These pages present us with the perfect model for a Christian, Jesus conversing among men and accomplishing the work of His Father; His manner of judging things ought to be ours, His words should give the tone and spirit to our conversations, His actions should trace the direction of our efforts.

John Baptist had above all things, a great and sincere devotion to the sacred mysteries of Our Saviour. Faithful to the impulsion that he had received at Saint-Sulpice, he considered the Christian, and still more the priest, as the continuator of the works and virtues of Jesus Christ. According to the beautiful expression of

St. Paul; alluding to himself, he accomplished the work of Christ. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for his body, which is the Church." Thus was his body offered to suffering, his heart to religion and charity, and his will to obedience and humility. In this way, Jesus lived in him, and his watchful attention was never to say or do anything that would be unworthy of Jesus.

It was especially in the mysteries of the childhood and passion that he loved to unite himself with Jesus.

He had, together with the most celebrated persons of the seventeenth century, a tender devotion to the Infant Jesus; and it was his delight to recite every day the litanies of the Holy Name of Jesus and of the Divine Child. On Christmas day, he was completely absorbed in the contemplation of the Infant of Bethlehem, and, as long as he had a junior novitiate, he loved to assemble on that day the youngest of his religious family to consecrate himself and them to the Holy Infant Jesus.

His devotion to Jesus suffering was not less ardent. The crucifix was for him, as it was for St. Francis of Assisi, the divine book in which he learned the value of humiliations, and whence he drew his love for the rebuffs and scorn heaped on him by the world. He penetrated himself profoundly with the sufferings and passion of Jesus, and took pleasure in reciting the litany of the Passion every day; the example of Our Saviour encouraged him to support with joy the insults and opprobrium with which the world loaded him.

What spoke to his heart even better than the Gospel and the Crucifix, was the Holy Eucharist; because, under the fragile species of bread and wine, he felt the

personal presence of his Redeemer and his God. With what eagerness he went to meet or visit his Master! The hours that he passed before the Most Blessed Sacrament always appeared too short, and he often prolonged them into the night. In the presence of the source of divine love, his heart was inflamed, his countenance shone with the light of ecstasy, and his sighs and moans would arouse to lively piety the most lukewarm souls.

As long as he had strength enough, he never failed to say Holy Mass every morning; his will gave such strength to his frail members, at the time of his greatest sufferings, that they seemed indulgent for the express purpose of permitting him to celebrate Mass. He would never begin the Holy Sacrifice till after a long preparation; and during the celebration, the recitation of the prayers, the movements that the priest makes at the altar, the attitude which shows the interior sentiments, all these, in John Baptist, were majestic and grave, pious and tender. Holy Communion produced in him a sort of spiritual rapture, which rendered him incapable of attending to any business until after a long time spent in acts of thanksgiving. "When M. De La Salle descended from the altar where he had just said Mass", said an eye witness, "I often saw him enter the sacristy quite beside himself and so transported with the love of God, that he was unable to unvest till he had rested himself for at least a quarter of an hour. I was afraid to disturb him during that time, lest I might withdraw him from the satisfaction which he appeared to enjoy in his intercourse with God."

It will be easily understood that he desired to initiate his Brothers in the happy experience of the divine gift, and that, contrary to the Jansenist tendency which kept

so many souls away from the Holy Eucharist, he exhorted them to approach the Holy Communion frequently. To those who abstained on account of slight imperfections, he used to say : “ Go, my dear Brother, approach the physician, and, after having made known your miseries, ask him to cure you.” If any one excused himself through lack of fervour, he would say to him : “ Go, then, and communicate to be made fervent. ”

However, he could not understand that any one would blindly direct souls to the holy table, and he kept back the presumptuous, who communicated without living more holily, with just as much care as he encouraged the timid who, through an excess of delicacy, abstained from Holy Communion. To keep alive in his disciples love with salutary fear, he gave them the most profitable counsels.

“ It would be a great abuse and sad disorder of soul, if the frequency of Communion were to diminish your fervour. On the contrary, nothing disposes us so well for the next, as the previous Communion; and if we do not resist the grace received in this Sacrament, our hunger is sated without removing the desire of receiving anew, just as heavenly glory so satisfies the Blessed, that they never lose the desire of seeing God; and after having beheld Him a million of years, they desire as much to see Him as if they had but just entered heaven. Are such your desires with regard to Holy Communion? It is well, at Holy Communion and during thanksgiving, to recall what we find most difficult in the service of God, and say to ourselves : Behold! God gives Himself to you; will you not give yourself entirely to Him? And since this difficulty is the only obstacle,

will you not overcome it through love for Him? Will you not make Him this sacrifice through the respect you have for Him? Doubtless, you would not dare to refuse. It is thus that we must urge and gently overcome ourselves."

HIS LOVE FOR THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN
ST. JOSEPH AND THE OTHER SAINTS

John Baptist's love for Jesus followed Him wherever he recognized Him present and acting. His spirit of faith discovered Jesus in the Saints, since they are the most noble and most active members of the mystic body of Christ, which includes the Church in heaven, and the Church on earth. Such was the foundation of his love for the Saints.

The Queen of Saints held the first place in his heart. He honoured her "as the tabernacle and living temple that God had built for Himself, and adorned with His own hands." He meditated with joy on all her mysteries, and took filial complacency in the wealth of graces which God had bestowed on her. "Was she not elevated", he said, "incomparably above all creatures, when she became the temple of God by conceiving the Son of God? It is then with reason that these words of the psalm cxxxi are applied to her: "God hath chosen her for His dwelling," and these others: "Thy temple is holy." The Abbot Rupert goes still further, saying that from the moment that the Holy Ghost descended into the Most Blessed Virgin to operate the conception of the Son of God, she became entirely

beautified with a divine beauty. This is why St. Bernard says that we should honour the Most Holy Virgin with the tenderest devotion, since God filled her with the plenitude of all good, when He enclosed the divine Word Himself within her womb.

The tenderness of his devotion to Mary urged him, from the very beginning, to confide his work to her protection; for in 1684, on the morning following the emission of the first vows, he conducted the Brothers on a pilgrimage to Notre-Dame-de-Liesse, to place the rising Institute as a child into the arms of its mother. This sanctuary of Liesse was very dear to him; when visiting his schools, he would stop there to pass long hours in prayer. It was to Mary that he had recourse in all his difficulties: when persecuted and humiliated, he would go and throw himself at her feet; before undertaking any important work, he placed it under her direction; if he was glad, he made her a sharer in his gladness by his filial thankfulness. He always terminated his prayers and, in fact, all his actions with a prayer to the Most Blessed Virgin, usually the *Sub tuum præsidium*; his last prayer of the day was also a prayer to Mary, *Maria, Mater gratiæ*. The more the heretics cried down the devotion of the Rosary, the dearer it became to him: all his free moments were employed in the recitation of his beads; and he gloried in carrying them ostensibly.

The Institute preserves the stamp of his great love for Mary; prayers to the Most Blessed Virgin hold an honourable place in it; the holy rosary is frequently recited, and her feasts kept with solemnity; the Brothers go to Mary in all their pressing needs, and place in her their most childlike confidence.

John Baptist's heart was attracted in a very particular manner to the devotion to St. Joseph. He wished that St. Joseph should be for his Institute what he was for the Holy Family, its chief and protector; for he hoped that since the Institute resembled the Holy Family at Nazareth by its poverty, simplicity and work, it would gain the sympathy and protection of St. Joseph. Moreover, his spirit of faith, which saw Jesus present in the children, made him desire that the Brothers should be worthy to conduct them as Joseph had been to conduct the Child Jesus; and for this end, he wished that they should honour and invoke St. Joseph as their model and inspirer.

But what especially touched him in St. Joseph, was his perfect abandonment to Providence, his prompt obedience to the voice of God, his submission in the midst of difficulties, his love of a hidden and obscure life: all these virtues formed John Baptist's personal ideal, and it was his daily preoccupation to form his Brothers on them. With these sentiments, and not content with the practices he had adopted for his own personal use, and also counselled to the Brothers, he decided that St. Joseph should be the patron and protector of the Institute, that his feast should be celebrated with all possible solemnity, that the Brothers should be very careful to inspire their pupils with a special devotion to the chaste guardian of Jesus and Mary. His disciples, faithful to so earnest a recommendation, have always put St. Joseph in the place of honour in their schools and colleges.

John Baptist's love extended to all the Saints of the heavenly court. He took pleasure in reading the lives of the Saints, and in causing them to be read, and he

established the practice of speaking during recreation about the life of the Saint that had been read at table. In speaking of the Brothers, he says: "They shall converse on the lives of the Saints, especially those who were the most remarkable for the spirit of the Institute, and also of such as had been noted for their mortification and zeal for the salvation of their neighbour."

He had however a special devotion to the following Saints: St. John Baptist, his patron, whom he admired for his innocence and spirit of penance, his love of solitude and prayer; the Apostles, whose zeal and holy ardour he so much desired to have; St. Peter and St. Paul, whom he venerated as the immovable pillars of the Holy Church; St. John the Evangelist, whose strong, loving soul ravished him; St. Ignatius of Antioch, whose immortal words: "I am the wheat of Christ; when I shall be ground by the teeth of the beasts, I shall become a bread without a stain," excited his ardour; St. Cassian, the martyred schoolmaster, whom he loved to propose as a model for his Brothers.

He felt himself powerfully drawn towards the founders of Religious Orders, such as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Philip Neri and St. Teresa, whose favours and prayers he implored for his Institute. Zealous missionaries, such as St. Francis Xavier and St. Vincent Ferrer, animated his zeal for the salvation of souls. The thought of the Saints of more modern times, St. Francis De Sales and St. Charles Borromeo, was particularly dear to him, as if their presence had not yet been entirely effaced, and as if he had inhaled the atmosphere impregnated with the perfume of their virtues.

His piety, ever open to the light and inspirations of

faith, did not make him forget the Angels. He cherished a special devotion to St. Michael, the chief of the heavenly militia, and he often invoked him during the grave assaults he suffered for the glory of God. As to the Guardian Angels, he respected and invoked them, and taught the Brothers the art of communing intimately with them. Are not the Brothers the visible angels of the children? Do they not work for the same end as the Guardian Angels, that is to say, for the eternal salvation of souls? Now, is it not just and proper, and even necessary that fellow-workers should understand one another, help one another, and that one should not undertake anything that could destroy the influence of the others? So the visible masters ought, before they speak or act, to pray to the invisible masters and consult them whose mission they desire to facilitate.

HIS SPIRIT OF RELIGION

The virtue of religion is the most authentic expression of our love of God and the Saints. Under its impetus, we are drawn to give them the honours of exterior worship, and, instead of concentrating within our souls the feelings of tenderness and devotion that we have for them, to proclaim by holy ceremonies that they are worthy of all homage and praise.

However great John Baptist's taste for praying to God and the Saints in mental prayer was, his ardent zeal could not dispense with those exterior manifestations by which love is pleased to express and maintain itself. Therefore worship supplied the lively desire of his

heart. He did not take pleasure in it like a child whose senses are satisfied with what is noble and sacred; he rejoiced, because it honoured God, and also, because it was to our weakness an image of the infinite homage that the Angels and Saints give to God in heaven; moreover, he saw in exterior worship an effective manner of preaching which often gains souls quicker to God than all the arguments of preachers.

Full of these ideas of the propriety and usefulness of sacred worship, he applied himself with an entirely religious spirit to the liturgical ceremonies. By a special grace of religion, he was inclined in his childhood to the divine ceremonies; for, as has already been said, he had not at that early age a sweeter joy than to be in church and serve at the altar. When, at the age of seventeen, he became a Canon, he was for his colleagues a model of regularity, modesty and piety. When he was ordained priest, despite his love of simplicity in all things, he did not think that his oratory could be too rich, nor the vestments too costly; and, throughout his life, this poor priest of God was prodigal when there was question of rendering honour to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

To have a satisfactory idea of his spirit of religion, it was necessary to see him at the altar. Blain, his biographer and friend, who had so often seen him celebrate Mass, does not hesitate to say that: "If Calvin, Beza and the other heretics had witnessed him in the act of offering the holy sacrifice, or if they had not seen any other priest in the sanctuary, they would have burned what they had written against the real presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and condemned themselves as guilty of heresy; or at least they would have been

unable to spread their errors among so many of their followers, if the Holy Mass had always been celebrated before their eyes in the manner in which it was by M. De La Salle. Who ever saw any one, during this august action, more penetrated with the greatness and grandeur of the dread sacrifice he was offering, or more united to Him who immolated Himself, or more humble in the presence of the Supreme Being to whom He was offered, or more attentive to the mysteries wrought, or more recollected and concentrated in God, or, in fine, one that was more devout during the sacred liturgy? I do not tire of repeating it: he appeared at the altar not as a man, but as a seraph; there he was in some sort clothed in the appearance that the Blessed will always have in heaven; he seemed to participate in advance in the glorious qualities of the resuscitated bodies. His countenance usually became quite inflamed, and betimes, even luminous, and sent forth rays of devotion, that inspired and roused the coldest souls."

He entertained and always showed the greatest respect for the holy places on account of God's presence therein. "When he entered a church", says his biographer, "his modesty, reverence and holy fear struck those who saw him, and, by reminding them of the respect due to the holy place, he seemed to reproach them with their little faith and their want of religion in the presence of the great God whom they had come to adore. When he was in a church, his spirit of religion betrayed and revealed him,... because the eye was never tired of looking at this priest, who manifested, in the house of God, the devotion of a saint and the modesty of an angel.

"When he saw any lack of reverence for the Majesty

before whom he trembled, he seemed to forget all his meekness, and rebuked, without regard for persons, those who were wilfully distracted and irreverent. Whenever he saw others violate the silence, modesty and respect which the presence of the Son of God residing on our altars requires, he entered into a holy indignation, and showed his sorrow and pain on beholding creatures forget, under the very eyes of their Creator, the reverence that is due to Him, and would say to them in a severe but charitable tone: "Do you not know that you are in the house of God?" And when any of the Brothers were reprehensible on this point, he called attention to their fault, and publicly corrected them when it was necessary, in order to remind them, so that they might not forget, of the grand sentiments of religion which he had impressed on them by his words and example."

He had so well succeeded in communicating his own spirit of religion, that at Chartres the devout demeanour of the Brothers was sufficient to restore a reverent behaviour in the churches in which they were present for the divine offices, and in Paris the pupils marched through the streets and prayed in the church with so much piety that the faithful often stopped to observe them and by this sight reanimate their own spirit of faith.

John Baptist, seeing God everywhere present, was profoundly recollected everywhere, which is but the outward expression of the religious respect due to God. He was careful on all occasions to exhibit this exterior mark of piety which characterizes interior souls, and which showed that he was always occupied with the

divine Majesty. He never entered a house without making an act of adoration of the presence of God in that place.

He said his breviary kneeling, and rarely standing or walking, and always uncovered, no matter how inclement the season might be : during this time, he appeared to be absorbed in the beauties of the divine office and to be delighted to be united to Jesus Christ and the Church to praise the divine Majesty in the name of men; he would then abandon himself to those happy transports which the Holy Ghost operates in souls that wholly correspond with grace.

When he said the office of the Most Blessed Virgin with the novices, it was always like them, uncovered, standing, and never leaning against anything; and if he thought he had made a mistake, he went just like the youngest amongst them, and prostrated himself in the middle of the oratory.

“ He desired ”, continues his biographer, “ that all the places set apart for prayer should be scrupulously clean, and that no one should enter but with respect. He loved to see the churches decorated and the altars well ornamented, so that the beauty and magnificence of the sanctuaries might give some idea of the grandeur of the God who is therein adored, and of the mysteries that are there wrought. ”

It afflicted him to see private residences more sumptuous than our churches, and vile creatures come to parade their pomp at the foot of the altar, as if to insult, by their luxury and magnificence, the poverty of Him who reigns in heaven. This same spirit of religion inspired him with great veneration for all holy things, relics, sacred vessels, and pictures, as

well as for all other things that had been separated from the profane, by some special blessing, and particularly holy water, which he used continually : a practice which the Brothers have preserved as a sacred custom.

HIS CHARITY FOR HIS NEIGHBOUR

According to theologians, it is the same virtue of charity that urges us to love and serve God and our neighbour. So it is not surprising that John Baptist, who was drawn towards God by so powerfull a movement of love, was likewise inclined towards men by a most cordial compassion and generous devotedness. Once again, was this observed fact verified in his person, that the more the heart is given to God, the more it belongs to men ; and that the love of God, far from developing egotism, destroys even its very roots, and causes Christian charity to spring up in its stead.

John Baptist had, in all his relations with men, no regard for self, but always thought of his neighbour. With what solicitude, for example, he watched over his religious family ! He foresaw all the needs of the Brothers and had all their wants supplied at the proper time. In his compassion, he felt their troubles, and, on several occasions, he travelled during the night to console a suffering Brother ; if he chanced to be in a community that was too poor to provide a convenient bed for the sick, he would with paternal kindness give up his own to alleviate the suffering of a sick Brother. He humbled himself to render them the lowest services, because he

loved them as his children, whose health was dearer to him than his own. Though he was very humble, even in things concerning his Institute, he always defended his Brothers against unkind insinuations: besides, it was a common practice with him to hide the faults of others and to protect the reputation of those who were the butt of slander or calumny, so that he gained the sympathy that we instinctively have for those who, we feel, will always protect our good name.

He did not confine his charity within narrow limits; his compassion embraced all whom he saw suffering. "Those who applied to him for assistance", says his biographer, "were always received charitably, with a pleasing countenance and a sincere affection... To instruct the poor, to console the afflicted, to visit the sick and aid the wretched, were exercises which charity rendered pleasing to him, and taught him to perform so as to make them full of sweetness for those who were the objects of them. There was no species of sickness or wretchedness that did not lose in his eyes all that might be loathsome or disagreeable about it. He never allowed it to appear that he felt the least repugnance either for the nature of the sickness or the character of the patient. It was not through insensibility; but the spirit of charity, united to mortification, permitted no sign of the least unpleasant impression to escape from him."

His kind heart was always guided by sentiments of faith. "For", continues his biographer, "as he loved his neighbour but for God, he paid no attention to his fine qualities or talents, to his condition, whether he was graceful, or sympathetic, or possessed conformity of feelings, or whether he could expect or hope for anything

from him; not one of these motives guided his actions, because he loved his neighbour with purity of intention, without excess or attachment, without danger, without inconstancy and without regard to persons, in short, in a manner worthy of God, and capable of honouring Jesus Christ, who thus loved us." This purity of intention in charity, far from rendering it cold or commonplace, gave it, on the contrary, a power which surpasses all natural pretensions. And we can easily convince ourselves of all this without going beyond the life of our Saint.

This spirit of faith filled his charity with generosity; not content with assisting the poor, he would even seek and honour them; during the famine, he distributed his rich patrimony among them; there was always a corner for guests in his poverty-stricken house, and always bread for those who were reduced to hold out the hand. He lavished his prayers and penances not less abundantly than his alms: of all those long hours given to silent, secluded prayer and merciless macerations, how many were not undertaken for the conversion of this or that sinner, or for the sanctification of this or that religious, or for the success of some good work! He believed in the profound influence of personal immolation united to that of Jesus Christ, and, in consequence, he became the victim of his personal charity.

It was also the spirit of faith that tempered his charity with energy enough to practise the love of enemies, to pardon injuries and to bear the faults of his neighbour.

God permitted enemies to arise against this man, whose heart was free from the least grain of malice, and that these enemies, bent on the destruction of his works,

should have the hardihood to overwhelm him with outrage and calumny. From the Duke De Mazarin who in 1682 so abruptly withdrew his esteem and favours, to the Archbishop of Rouen who inflicted disciplinary punishment on him on his very deathbed, he constantly met with some harsh or ungrateful hand to chastise him with humiliations. But, ever faithful to the Gospel precept, he loved his enemies and even spoke well of them, and made himself ingenious to do them a service; but, above all, he prayed for them. To the most concerted efforts of his enemies, he opposed only silence, or, if he did reply, it was with the most touching marks of charity. His biographer says : “ No one ever knew better how to pardon; one was sure of gaining his friendship after offering him an insult. It would appear as if insults and outrages were the quickest and shortest way to reach his heart, and all his kindness seemed reserved for those who had been guilty of them. ”

Of all the affronts and humiliations that he received, none had been more humiliating than the judgment of the Châtelet in which he was condemned for having extorted money and having suborned a minor. He bore it however with unalterable patience. He neither complained nor murmured; he was not heard to blame the magistrates nor discredit his solicitors; nor did he bewail the treason of his friend Rogier, nor the infamous proceedings of the Clements. One would have said that he regarded himself as guilty. It was because he was insensible to injuries done to him personally, and showed anxiety and zeal but to avenge the outrages offered to God.

He had not less merit by continually supporting the

defects of his neighbour, which is, according to St. Paul, the perfect "fulfilment of the law of Christ." Though, by nature, he was amiable and easy of access, it cost him much to accustom himself to the conversation of men without culture or birth. But, having before his eyes the example of Jesus Christ educating the poor fishermen of Galilee for their apostolic mission, he took it to heart to exercise the like kindness and condescension in a similar task. He succeeded to such an extent, that he gave no sign of natural aversion or ill feeling. He equally loved all his disciples, without making any exception of persons; he accommodated himself to all sorts of tempers, seeking only to avoid manifesting any himself. His biographer says: "He supported the importunities of the scrupulous, bore with the troubles of the sick, listened to the complaints of the afflicted, suffered the weakness of the pusillanimous, fortified their courage, and alleviated the pains of all."

In his great wisdom and experience, he looked upon the union of minds and hearts in a community as the good *par excellence*; so he made it the object of the constant application of his charity. Being an enemy of disputes, he acquiesced as much as possible in the views of others; he avoided deciding by himself, for fear of giving occasion for contradiction; he made it a personal law to consult others, and adopted their advice when he saw it was just. No one followed better than he this recommendation which he made one day: "Try to have engaging manners, and act so that one of your principal occupations may be to procure union among the Brothers."

HIS DETACHMENT FROM WORLDLY GOODS

In order that a Christian soul, acting under the inspiration of grace, may rise to these heights, and keep itself there during long years, and find ease in the practice of virtue that is so far beyond the reach of nature, it must be detached from all earthly obstacles; for it is only the unfettered soul that can take such a flight. John Baptist had, by means of indefatigable mortification, succeeded in breaking the ties that generally hold souls captives of the world, the senses and self-will. The love of poverty delivered him from the absorbing cares of the goods of this world; chastity and the empire that he exercised over his senses made him master of the flesh; and, finally, he escaped from the tyranny of private judgment and self-will by his profound humility and perfect obedience.

If we follow him in the practice of these austere virtues, we shall find on what a solid foundation this beautiful edifice of Christian perfection was based.

Though he was the eldest son of an opulent family, and had been, from the age of sixteen, provided with a rich prebend, he never allowed his heart to be seduced by the love of riches; over and over again, he gave proofs that he observed to the letter this saying of the Wise Man: "If riches abound, set not your heart on them." He was so little attached to riches, that in 1677, when he was only a deacon, he tried to exchange his rich prebend for a curacy that would have been a burden rather than a resource. But his detachment

showed itself in all its lustre when he resigned his canonry and sold his patrimony to lead a life of poverty and work with the Brothers. If he had had the slightest attachment to worldly goods, what pretexts could he not have found not to sacrifice them? Would not his zeal for the schools have prompted him to keep them to build schools and to support the masters, and thus assure the future of his work? He despoiled himself of all, sold all, because he felt himself interiorly impelled by these words of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor... and come, follow me."

Having made himself poor, he sincerely loved poverty. It was his by right of conquest, and its acquirement had not been less difficult for him than the acquisition of riches for many others: it appeared to his lively faith the surest means of resembling Jesus and of making the work of perfection easy. Hence, he never spoke of it but with enthusiasm: "You say you are poor! How this word pleases me! For, to say that you are poor, is the same as to say you are happy. You say you have never been so poor: so much the better; you have never had such an opportunity to practise the virtue of poverty as you now have." And the wise founder adds these words which so well reveal his thoughts: "Riches ordinarily corrupt the hearts of good religious, and the strict observance of the vow of poverty is one of the greatest blessings for religious houses." And as poverty has its value before God in proportion to the supernatural spirit that vivifies it, he was careful to direct the intention of his disciples: "Cherish poverty", he says in the *Short Treatises*, "as Jesus loved it, and as the surest

means of advancing in perfection. Be always prepared to beg, should it please Providence, and to die in the greatest destitution. Have nothing, dispose of nothing, not even of yourself; in fine, strive to be despoiled of everything, that you may be like unto Our Lord, who, through love for us, spent His whole life in absolute want. ”

John Baptist could with so much greater right speak in this way, as he had more painfully felt the blows of poverty. For him, poverty did not consist in simply detaching his heart from riches; it brought him, in its train, humiliations, inconveniences, and many privations. He knew, by experience, all the humiliations and miseries of the poor, and he loved them.

As long as he was rich, he was loaded with respect and honour, for fortune preserves or makes rank. But, from the moment that he became poor, he became the object of scorn and abandonment, which are the common patrimony of the indigent; for even when one assists them, or feels favourably inclined towards them with a certain kind of love, they are liable to be made to feel that they are of an inferior condition. There was nothing that is humiliating in poverty that could repel our Saint: it was his pleasure to appear poor, he supported himself with the bread of alms, he did not fear to beg even in Rheims; and he clothed himself in the mantle of the Brothers, precisely because it was looked upon as being the dress of poor people.

Poverty did not screen him from privations any more than from contempt. How often was not his house in want of bread! During the famine, it was, indeed, necessary to undergo the forced fasts that the distress imposed on all; but even in ordinary times, when the

tables of the poor were abundantly supplied, that of John Baptist often lacked everything. When he had his novitiate at Vaugirard, the support of the community nearly always depended on what the Serving Brother could collect each day from the rich families or from the religious houses of the faubourg Saint-Germain. Since he was supported by alms, his food for the morrow was very uncertain; the Saint took complacency in being thus in entire dependence on Providence. His was such, that, when he commenced a new foundation, he did not always ask for the necessary funds to assure its maintenance; he loved to inspire the Brothers with this firm confidence in God, expecting from His liberal hand the bread of every day. This spirit of poverty was never so well displayed as in the establishment of the schools of Rouen.

If he thus depended on God for the food of each day, with still greater reason he incurred no expense for the adorning or the furnishing of the houses where he dwelt. The furniture of Vaugirard was so poor in 1698, that Madam Des Voisins, through sheer pity, took upon herself to provide the essential furniture in order to prepare the Grand'Maison for the reception of the Brothers. According to Blain, the Saint's biographer, "if the clothes, the furniture, the utensils for the use of the Brothers, had been thrown in the street, no one, though poor and wretched he might be, would have been found to touch them: they would have excited pity rather than envy." We can now understand why John Baptist was in no hurry to have his Brothers to make the vow of poverty, and that he was satisfied with the vows of obedience and stability to assure the progress of the Institute for the time being; were they not at that heroic age practising the strictest poverty?

Besides, the holy founder possessed the secret of making them love it. For, not content with sharing in all their privations, he lived in greater poverty than they. He accepted only the most common cloth for his dress, and he wore it threadbare and patched, as long as decency permitted; at table, the poorest portion pleased him; and he claimed as by right the most inconvenient and barest room; he mended his own clothes, made his bed, and swept his room. When, after several attempts, his friends at last succeeded in removing his old clothes in order to replace them by new ones, he reluctantly let them go, saying "they were still good enough for a poor priest."

God, who has promised a hundredfold even in this life to those who sacrifice all to follow Him, did not fail in His word towards His servant, for He filled him with spiritual consolations which only detached souls enjoy in their intercourse with God, and He provided for all the temporal wants of his community with such constant and unfailing solicitude, that the Institute passed, not indeed without suffering, but without any loss, through years of most terrible trials.

HIS CHASTITY AND MORTIFICATION OF THE SENSES

John Baptist was not content with gaining victories over the exterior world by his detachment from riches and by his entire abandonment to Providence. He knew that to be completely the master of one's self and to give one's self entirely to God, the soul must also be delivered from the power of the senses and freed from the thralldom

of the flesh. The lessons that he gave to the Brothers on this subject show us that he considered this of the greatest importance; in the *Short Treatises* he says : "The senses being the portals through which sin usually enters the soul, the Saints were most careful to mortify them, so that they might not so easily fall into sin. What should induce you to mortify your senses is, that the more you mortify them, the more also will you enjoy interior peace and the presence of God."

His first care was to curb his senses in such a manner, that his purity always remained inviolable. In his youth, his love of chastity made of him an angel in the flesh, and his extreme delicacy on this point presaged his vocation to the priesthood. From the moment he entered Holy Orders, he manifested an extreme horror of the least fault that could tarnish purity; nor could he endure the least thing capable of throwing even a shadow upon this holy virtue. It was through the spirit of vigilance that he loved to live in solitude where nothing could trouble his senses; he made a covenant with his eyes, lest dangerous images might enter into his soul; he scrupulously avoided all unnecessary intercourse with persons of the other sex, never remaining alone with them, and guarding against all familiarity. If he was so severe when being ill at Rheims, that he would not receive the visit of his grandmother in his room, it was because he wished to give his community one of those never-to-be-forgotten lessons so often taught by the examples of the Saints.

But he was well aware that the most redoubtable enemies of chastity are those that dwell in the suggestions of the flesh itself. "Make war on your bodies", he used to say, "mortify the flesh, and, with time and

perseverance, you shall free yourself from its assaults and all the natural instincts that furnish it with arms to attack you. There is an infallible connection between sensual, unmortified flesh and this vice. The feeling of pain blunts all attraction for pleasure, and the body that groans under the weight of austerity loses all idea of voluptuousness. "Believe me", the great St. Anthony was accustomed to say to his disciples, "the impure spirit dreads vigils, fasts, voluntary poverty and an austere life. When he finds the flesh pampered and indulged, half his work is done : it is only a heap of dry wood, tow, and straw, which he can easily inflame by the blazing shafts and the sparks of the fire of hell, which obscene thoughts always carry with them."

These strong convictions explain why our Saint practised such severe austerities, and why he impressed his Brothers with such generous ardour for mortification. He knew all the value of penance : he was well aware that it is the only sure guardian of chastity ; he knew also that it alone renders the soul free to apply itself to God. For this purpose he so severely chastised his flesh and brought it under subjection.

Very different from those inconsistent Christians who make every effort to escape from the cross sent by Providence, and inflict their bodies with macerations of their own choosing, he began to mortify his senses by willingly accepting all the sufferings, of whatever kind they might be, that came to him from the hand of God. The burden was certainly very heavy already : he never made the slightest effort to rid himself of it. Certain most painful infirmities were brought on by his repeated vigils and prolonged meditations, and yet, he never

complained. From kneeling on the damp floor of Vaugirard, he contracted rheumatism the acute pains of which could be assuaged only by remedies more violent than the evil itself; by remaining too long on his knees, a most painful wen was developed, which could be removed but by an excruciating operation. And yet these are only incidents in a life every hour of which, especially during the last thirty years, seemed doomed to incessant martyrdom. However intense his sufferings might be, and even when the most essential cares were lacking, he never uttered the least word that could be construed into a complaint. At the very most he would simply repeat: "May God be blessed!" Was he not too happy to be crucified like his Master, and could he have any higher ambition than that his body should be immolated to God, with Christ?

Besides, he never spared himself; in order the more surely to keep his senses within the bounds of duty, he refused them even the most innocent satisfaction, and often treated them with merciless rigour.

For example, he was not content with simply turning his eyes away from all that could flatter sensuality and curiosity; the better to keep himself in God's presence, he ordinarily kept his eyes cast down, so that no objects might enter which could leave vain images in his soul. Far from inquiring after worldly news and the frivolous tales with which worldlings fill their minds, he loved to remain in silence and solitude, and, when he could not help hearing useless conversations, he would show his dislike for them by reluctant and cold attention. If charity was in danger of being wounded, he would promptly put a stop to the conversation by his deliberate air of indifference.

At first he had some trouble in overcoming his sense of taste; for, having been brought up at a table served with delicate meats, he found it difficult to accustom himself to the common food of his poor disciples. But a prolonged fast soon conquered nature, and from that time, says his biographer, "the flesh became so well accustomed to abstinence and the most rigorous fasts, to the poorest, insipid, and even repugnant victuals, that it seemed quite insensible." From 1684, John Baptist would suffer no one to serve him with food different from that of the Brothers; henceforth, taking his portion of the common fare, he distinguished himself only by the pains he took to choose what seemed the most repulsive. For fear of taking pleasure in his food, he used to mix a bitter powder with it, and, though his portion was scanty enough, yet he would lay aside the best part of it for the poor. It seemed painful to him to be obliged to go to eat, and he never was happier than during the seasons of fast or the time of a famine: he literally believed the words of Holy Writ: "He that nourisheth his servant delicately from his childhood, afterwards shall find him stubborn." To invite him to a well-served table was the same as condemning him to torture; and if, when travelling, he was sometimes obliged to partake of anything better than the ordinary fare, he would punish himself for it afterwards by redoubling his privations.

He armed himself with rude instruments of penance against his body, already nearly worn out with fasting; he handled with inexorable severity the discipline with steel rosettes; at one time, he would afflict his flesh with the hairshirt and girdle; at another, he would chastise it with iron chains, having sharp points. It has been

found possible to constitute, with the instruments of penance that escaped his vigilant humility, a well-furnished wardrobe of mortification, which preaches the practice of penance more eloquently than any sermon. His example excited such emulation among his disciples, that the discipline was in honour, and no other permission was more earnestly solicited than to chastise the body. The Saint gladly yielded to these generous desires, for he was persuaded that an edifice that had its foundations set and cemented with the blood of mortification, would not give way under the wear of time nor the assaults of the storms of temptation. And in the same way as all Christians should remember that they live by the crucifixion of the august victim of Calvary, the Brothers should not forget that their present usefulness is the fruit of the voluntary crucifixion of their holy founder and his first disciples.

INTERIOR MORTIFICATION BY OBEDIENCE
AND HUMILITY

However, John Baptist did not stop at the mortification of the senses; he himself practised it and urged his Brothers to practise it only to attain interior mortification with more facility. He used to repeat: "I prefer an ounce of interior mortification to a pound of exterior penance." For, being convinced that the end of mortification is to restore to the soul its full liberty, it would be of no use to be disengaged from the goods of this world, or even to have destroyed the obstacles of the flesh, if it must remain a captive to self-will and pride. John Baptist was always on his guard against that fatal

rock of pride, on which so many religious virtues go to wreck: he enjoyed complete Christian liberty by means of obedience and humility.

In his eyes, obedience was not a state of servility in which the will lowers and even effaces itself in a purely passive submission to the orders of a superior; on the contrary, he considered it as the most exalted expression of a victorious will, delivered from the caprice and inconstancy of nature, and obeying with full reflection the rules that it accepts from the hand of God: Obedience, thus understood, appeared to John Baptist to be a gain and not in anywise a loss for the religious; besides the value that it gives the individual himself, it is an essential condition of order in a community. For this reason, he recommended it to the Brothers as the very foundation of the Institute: "No other virtue", he used to say to them, "is so necessary for you as obedience, since it is essential to your state, and since it alone can sustain you therein; all the others without this would be superficial: in religion, obedience alone gives the other virtues their special character."

In order that obedience might be active and meritorious, he desired that it should be Christian and supernatural. He proposed Our Lord as the model: "Jesus Christ", he said, "prepared himself by submission and obedience to accomplish the great work of the redemption of man and the conversion of souls." Though man commands, we obey God alone. "The Brothers", he says, "shall always see God in the person of their Director, and they shall be mindful not to address themselves to him but as to one invested with God's authority; they shall put themselves in this disposition before presenting themselves to him. They shall not speak to

the Brother Director but with profound respect, always in a low voice, and in terms which show the veneration they have for him, as holding the place of God, whom they should recognize and respect in the person of their Director. ”

With the heart filled with this spirit of faith, he gave himself to the practice of obedience. Wherever he could discover the smallest particle of the divine authority, he humbly and promptly submitted to it. During his student-life at Saint-Sulpice, and at the seminary of Saint-Nicolas two years before his death, he gave examples of the most scrupulous obedience and fidelity to all the regulations. His spiritual directors found him obedient to their least decisions: he was prepared to exchange his canonicate for a parish, on the advice of Nicolas Roland; and when there was question of abandoning his riches, he only awaited the word of M. Callou; while he was wanted in Paris, M. Callou detained him in Rheims, etc. The bishops had not a more submissive subject; he declared himself the humble servant of the prelates in whose dioceses there were Brothers; and he remained obedient, even when rebuffed; he opposed them without swerving from the respect that he owed them whenever they attempted to alter the essential Rules of his Institute. He professed the most filial deference to the Sovereign Pontiff; and in order to prove it in a more authentic manner, he sent two Brothers to Rome; and when the Bull *Unigenitus* was published, there was not a priest that more promptly submitted to its decisions than he.

But nowhere was his obedience better seen than in his community. There his only ambition was to obey, and for this he sought the lowest rank; and the greatest

sorrow of his life was, to be so long maintained in the office of superior in spite of his repugnance. And when, on two several occasions, he had succeeded in resigning the government of the Institute, what a happiness he then felt to be dependent on a superior, to ask permissions, and to make his daily accusation with the Brothers! With what simplicity he ambited the last place, and accomplished all his religious duties! Besides, even during his long career of superior, he satisfied his taste for obedience by his perfect observance of the Rules of the community.

To him obedience was sweet and easy, because it was founded on sincere and profound humility; for, without true humility which humbles mind and will, obedience is only a mask that hides our weakness and, perhaps, our ambition. Humility gave his obedience its sincerity and merit. He disliked to speak of himself, and feared that cunning self-love which silently glides into the soul of those who speak of their faults and sins. He would never tolerate the Brothers' speaking of him personally; and his humility imposed on them a very hard sacrifice, when he commanded that they should never speak of any person living. He had such horror of all personal marks of honour and praise, that, on his journeys, he would go a long distance out of his way to avoid the presbyteries where he feared he might be received with too much honour. In the year 1716, being a guest of M. Gense, a great benefactor of the school of Calais, he was highly indignant when he detected an artist, hidden behind a curtain, taking his portrait.

Instead of running after worldly celebrity and seeking the esteem of men, his only ambition was to be unknown, to live in solitude, and to have intercourse with God

alone. For this purpose he sought the most secluded cell, abstained from all unnecessary visits, and limited himself to such relations as were absolutely essential. When visiting the communities, he was happy only when he found himself in the midst of his Brothers; he enveloped himself in such profound silence, that his presence was almost unperceived; he was taken for a poor priest, without birth or station, occupied with humble people. This voluntary obscurity gratified his desires; but he did not draw interior pleasure from it, because he was too humble to taste the secret joy of being "unknown and counted as nothing."

It was his delight to converse with the humble; when he taught class, he preferred the least advanced and dullest pupils. When in community, he preferably sought out those Brothers who were the most likely to mortify him; he spoke to them uncovered, and refrained from asking any service of them. During his illness, he wished to be taken to the hospital, so as not to be a trouble to any one; one day he was greatly distressed, because he thought his sickness would ruin the community, and he begged that he might be let die, rather than be the cause of so much expense. It is conceivable how, with such lowly sentiments of himself, he made so many attempts to descend from the first rank; and when he ceased to be superior, it was his happiness to take his place after the Serving Brothers.

It was the grace of God that produced these humble dispositions in his soul, to prepare him to meet and accept with humble patience the numberless insults of which he was the object during the space of forty years: during this long period, he was spared neither injuries, nor outrages, nor treasons, nor cutting words, nor humil-

iating treatment. If we consider that all sorts of humiliations came on him at the same time from all quarters like a mighty deluge, — from ecclesiastical and civil authorities, from his natural family as well as from his family of adoption, from children whom he had brought up and from disciples whom he had associated with him in his work, — we shall find that the history of his life is only one long chain of trials and persecutions. He bowed his head under this torrent of opposition and contempt, without uttering a word of complaint, without either defending or excusing himself, and without making the least effort to undeceive the public mind; he considered himself as convicted before men, and awaited his justification from God alone.

So humble a soul had grace to speak of humility. Did he not unconsciously paint his own portrait in the following counsels to his Brothers?

“ Have a lowly opinion of yourself, consider that you are worthless, and that God makes use of you as a vile instrument, in itself fit only to draw down His malediction; never say the least word that could raise you in the good opinion of others. Shun the praises and approbation of men; and, if you hear anything said to your advantage, think that all honour is due to God alone, while you deserve only confusion. Remain silent and humble yourself before God, seeing that you are nothingness and sin. On the other hand, humbly endure contempt and rebuffs as most just; always select what is worst, when choice is allowed; be not eager to speak in recreation or at other times; when you speak, do so in a simple and unaffected manner. When reprov'd or warn'd of your faults, do not justify yourself, unless your superior orders you to tell the truth. ”

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRIEST

When a man practises the Christian virtues to such perfection, he cannot be commonplace in the priesthood. Our object in this chapter, is not to show that John Baptist was a holy priest, but rather to find in what direction he was led by the sacerdotal grace, and how he corresponded to it. He had such a high idea of his vocation that, throwing all worldly influences aside, he gave himself up entirely to the guidance of the Spirit of God dwelling in him. Now the divine Spirit touched his heart with zeal for souls, and opened up for him, in the education of the poor, an apostolic career as yet almost entirely unexplored, along which the Saint, as a fearless pioneer, advanced and marked his progress with the happiest results. In a word, he understood that the priesthood for him should be an apostolate, and his field of labour was that of education.

THE ESTEEM OF JOHN BAPTIST FOR HIS PRIESTLY
VOCATION

From his very childhood, John Baptist seemed destined for the altar. For, instead of the inclinations common to his age and rank, his tastes were for the things of the church: his great pleasure, when at home, was to imitate the holy ceremonies and to read the history of the Saints; his joy was to go to church to take part in the divine offices, to join in the sacred canticles and to serve the priest during the august Sacrifice. Although he was the eldest child of a noble and opulent family, he was never seduced by the brilliant careers of the world; on the contrary, attracted by the interior call of God, he entered the clerical state at the age of eleven. At sixteen, he accepted the canonry that his relative Dozet offered him in the Chapter of Notre-Dame, and, having finished his humanities, he gave himself without delay or hesitation to the study of theology. He was only twenty-one when he contracted the solemn and definitive engagements of the subdiaconate; and if he appeared slow to embrace the other degrees of the clerical state, it was through his sovereign respect for the dignity of priest and in view of acquiring by longer efforts the holiness which that state supposes, but there never was the slightest momentary looking back in that strong and decided soul.

From the moment of his ordination to the priesthood, he had the greatest idea of the sublimity of his vocation; his spirit of faith reminded him that the priest

should be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the example for the faithful; in his opinion, the man whose functions keep him almost constantly in church and about the altar, who carries Jesus Christ in his hands, who dispenses the mysteries of God, and who, in his quality of mediator, is raised above the earth, even to the throne of the divine mercy, should be accounted above the angels. The more he felt himself dignified by his vocation, the more holily he endeavoured to live. Looking on holiness as a serious obligation, he held the least fault in abhorrence; he avoided even the shadow of sin, and had no other desire than to please God. In spite of his endeavours, he considered himself unworthy, and could not see himself so closely united to the mysteries of Jesus Christ without being seized with a holy fear. He was not able to conceive how priests could be negligent or relaxed in their daily relations with holy things; he was shocked at the sight of the least negligence in the ministers of God, and if it had been his vocation, he would have worked with the zeal of a Bourdoise, a Boudon, of a Vincent De Paul and an Olier, for the reform of the Clergy.

As for himself, he entered fully into the spirit of his state. He sought therein neither his ease, nor his advantages, nor his repose: he had offered his life to the Church and to souls, he had now only to sacrifice his riches, his time and his strength for the same objects. When he was but yet a deacon, he gave striking proofs of his readiness to separate himself from all when his spiritual director proposed to him to exchange his rich canonicate for a poor and laborious parish. He had such a constant disposition for work and devotedness, that after having immolated his God in the morning on

the altar, he thought of nothing but of immolating himself during the rest of the day. "His sacerdotal character", says his biographer, "seemed to repeat to him unceasingly that since he was ordained to perpetuate the mysteries of the cross, he should attach himself to it so as to be able to say with saint Paul: "With Christ, I am nailed to the cross." The sins of the people with which priests are laden, their own sins, the state of the Victim that they offer, the memorial of His Passion which they represent, the obligation of sharing in His sufferings: behold the reasons that kept our holy priest in a state of perpetual sacrifice. What did he not, in fact, sacrifice to God! Riches, conveniences, pleasures, repose, health and even reputation; he offered all without sparing anything. The holocaust was entire and perfect. Pure, disinterested charity was pleased with such a sacrifice, because it found therein completeness and all absence of reserve.

He accomplished with unalterable respect the sacred functions of his priestly calling and office: custom had not begotten in him either routine or familiarity. His sentiments of veneration were as unchangeable as the sacred mysteries of the altar, and the vivacity of his faith became more ardent from year to year. What he says in the *Short Treatises*, regarding Holy Communion is only the history of his own fervent piety; the frequency of his Communions did not diminish their fervour; as he did not fail to correspond with the Eucharistic graces, this sacrament satiated him without destroying the appetite and desire for Communion.

He was not less exact than pious; for he conformed with most scrupulous fidelity to the canons and decisions of the Church. Reason and the spirit of faith

made him look upon it as an imperious duty to observe strictly all the regulations of the state he had embraced. He so loved and respected the ecclesiastical habit, that never, for any reason whatsoever, would he dispense himself from wearing his soutane : once, indeed, he did put on the short cassock, but then it was to escape the Camisards who infested the Cévennes. Not even in sickness nor in the presence of his most intimate friends, would he appear without his soutane. His tonsure was always very marked. He was faithful to keep his hair short, and was highly indignant at seeing wigs and other finery introduced among the clergy of his time.

Finally, the respect that he always manifested to his ecclesiastical superiors was another proof that he completely possessed the spirit of his state. “ No one more than he ”, writes his biographer, “ had the hierarchical spirit, nor manifested more of the submission and subordination that go to maintain peace within the body of the Church, which is done by the dependence of the members on their Chiefs, established to govern it. He infused this spirit of entire submission into his disciples, and he ceased to acknowledge as his children those who began to lose it. For this reason he was singularly honoured, esteemed and loved by all the bishops who knew him. ”

HIS ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS

However, it is neither the spirit of religion nor the love of discipline that constitutes the characteristic mark of the priest. According to the words of St. Paul,

“ every priest is ordained for men ”, and Our Lord, when giving His Apostles their mission, said to them, “ Going therefore teach ye all nations : baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. ” The special characteristic of the priest, chosen by God to save souls, is zeal. A priest without zeal would be as incomplete as an organism that lacked a heart : for having no heart, it has no life.

Sacerdotal grace had too deeply penetrated the soul of John Baptist not to enkindle therein the fire of zeal. Our Saint was drawn towards souls by the love that impelled him towards God, Jesus Christ and the Church. Could he stand by and let those dear souls perish who were created to the image of God, and to be His heritage, and was it not his duty to save them from the empire of Satan ? If Jesus so loved them as to sacrifice Himself for them, should not he, a priest, labour and even suffer that the sufferings of the Saviour might not be in vain ? Looking on the Church as a mother whose children Christians are, he wished that she might be fruitful in the numbers of the faithful, honoured by their moral conduct, and rendered powerful by the influence of their virtues. A single soul had an infinite value in his eyes : to see a single soul abandoned to sin, exposed to eternal damnation, was enough to rouse his priestly heart, and nothing would seem to him too difficult to save a sinner.

He had this exalted idea of the sacerdotal state from his youth ; but in the seminary of Saint-Sulpice and afterwards under the direction of Nicolas Roland, it developed to such a point, that his canonicate appeared a sinecure to him, and so he proposed to exchange it for a cure of souls. If his desires could not be put into

effect in 1677, they were generously gratified in 1683; by sacrificing his canonicate, his object was less to become poor than to acquire full liberty to devote himself entirely to souls. From the day of his ordination until the end of his long career, he sought God by working for souls; in the painful labours in which Providence engaged him, he had no object in view but souls. His mission of educator did not absorb the whole of his life; without ever losing sight of the care of the Brothers and the children, he knew how to find leisure to attend to secondary works.

He devoted himself little to preaching; his biographer mentions only one mission which he gave in the vicinity of Rheims about 1682. Though on some occasions he accepted the direction of nuns and some persons in the world, he was little inclined to this kind of ministry; not only did he make every possible effort to lessen his relations with women, but he was also reluctant to take up any work that obliged him to be absent, no matter how short the time, from his community. On the other hand, when there was question of works compatible with his life of retirement, and especially those that would not necessitate his withdrawal from the company of his Brothers, he received with open arms and heart all souls that presented themselves. And, indeed, there were many who came, and all very eager to hear his words and to be guided by his moral influence. Sometimes they were ecclesiastics who came to renew their fervour or be converted from a relaxed life: he had some such always in his house, both in Paris and at Rheims; he received them during the most trying times of the famine and the most troubled periods of persecutions. At other times, they would be

laymen, generally hardened sinners, who had been leading scandalous lives, and whom other priests had tried in vain to convert, and who were drawn to him by grace that they might undergo a complete transformation. Again, they were young libertines, indocile and lost to all moral conduct, and with whom all efforts for their conversion had been useless, who were brought to him and placed under the sovereign influence that he exercised over souls.

He had, in fact, a particular gift of gaining hearts. The most abandoned sinners seldom escaped his influence, and he knew how to get admittance to souls at whose doors zealous priests had long knocked in vain. This precious gift was at the same time the effect of nature and grace. United to God by almost continuous prayer, he was penetrated as it were with divine power which emanated from him and gently enveloped souls; he was in the hands of God as an obedient instrument by the supernatural life that animated him.

This sensible presence of God within him, communicated to his natural qualities an irresistible power of action. His gentle nature became a soothing unction for many a poor embittered soul; his affectionate kindness won the love of the most indifferent hearts, and subdued the most rebellious; by his consummate prudence and knowledge of the spiritual life, he gained the full confidence of those who sought his direction; besides, there was nothing disdainful in his manner, no precipitation or carelessness in his words or actions that could in the slightest degree shock souls or close them against him. We shall here quote Blain's own words: "What had been said of his Divine Master could be said of the disciple, that he loved sinners and called

himself their friend. They always found in him a tender father, a charitable physician, an enlightened guide, a zealous advocate and mediator with God, and a true guardian angel. The mere sight of him attracted them towards him; they were charmed by his gracious manners, and they had nothing to hide from a man who seemed to bear them in his heart. To see their miserable condition so moved him, that he pitied their wretchedness and wept over their sins when they did not weep over them themselves; they learned to deplore their wanderings, to bewail their faults and to look for a remedy for them in his charity... What he had begun in an insensible heart, with a warm and efficacious word, prayer armed with his austerities and mortifications completed, and, generally speaking, no sinners, no matter how steeped and inveterate in crime, resisted the grace he obtained for them, or the example of virtue by which he edified them. All of them, persuaded that the holy priest did more for their conversion than they themselves, and that their salvation cost him many tears and much blood, were ashamed of their cowardice, and, after his example, they determined to redeem their sins by their own acts of penance and mortification. ”

Whenever a sinner came, the Saint seemed to have nothing else to do than to occupy himself exclusively with him; he at once led him to the oratory and there would devote several hours to hear his confession. However precious his time might otherwise be, he gave as much of it as the circumstances required, in order to assure a permanent conversion. He did not lose sight of these returned prodigals, but kept up continual relations with them for their future perseverance. “ In

getting them to promise to come and see him from time to time", says Blain, "he tried to strengthen them in good and to give them a taste for virtue. As they had given him the key of their hearts, he spared nothing to open them to grace and the love of God. The only distinction he made among them was that the most criminal and profligate appeared to be the special objects of his charity... They were happy to see their confessor, the confidant of their crimes and disorders, treat them with honour and esteem, instead of being disgusted with them and despising them."

A few of these hardened sinners exercised his patience and zeal for a long time. While the Saint lived at Vaugirard, there often came to see him an obdurate man, who would neither humble himself for his monstrous faults nor repent of them. After having very forcibly pointed out to him the most heart-stirring motives of repentance, "he sent him to the chapel to hear Mass, whilst he, on his side, retired behind the altar, where he was at liberty to prostrate himself with his face to the ground, and he remained in this humble and penitent posture during the whole time of the holy sacrifice, to obtain for this hardened sinner a contrite and humble heart."

If, now and then, after having exhausted all the resources of prayer, mortification, and exhortation, he had not succeeded in making any impression, he sought his consolation in God and said: "We have done all that depended on us, it is for God to do the rest. Conversion is His work; we must abide His time and pleasure. He requires of us the care, and not the cure."

He generally had such success, that parish-priests and confessors often consulted him in embarrassing

cases, or sent him penitents whose conversion required a miracle of grace. Here is the testimony of one of those priests: "The holy man, M. De La Salle, used to render me great assistance in the guidance of some troubled souls of whose cure I had despaired."

The eagerness with which he received sinners astonished his disciples. Sometimes he was deceived; but should he, for fear of being once deceived by any hypocrite, drive away a hundred pilgrims that were sincere in their search for grace and peace in his house?

Someone made the remark, one day, during the time of the famine, that perhaps some of his hosts were more hungry than sorry: "What does that matter", replied the Saint, "provided they make a good retreat."

If such was the love of John Baptist for those strayed sheep that grace brought him as additional labour, what tender charity must he not have had for the flock that God confided to him and for which He gave him the special vocation of apostolic educator?

HOW JOHN BAPTIST WAS CALLED TO EXERCISE HIS PRIESTLY ZEAL IN EDUCATION

If zeal is permitted to embrace the universe in its ambition, human nature, too short-lived to satisfy it, puts a limit to its work. Experience has proved that the fruits of a man's labour are so much the more considerable, as he confines himself and his energies to one clearly defined object and devotes thereto all his time and capacity. This division of labour produced, in a

great measure, the religious renaissance of the seventeenth century; for well-marked vocations brought many men of great worth into evidence, who took up and defended all the doctrinal questions of the Church, that were at that period attacked: brilliant controversialists, as Duperron, Pétau and Bossuet, confounded the heretics; zealous missionaries, as Vincent De Paul and the priests of Saint-Lazare, re-enkindled the faith in the country parts; virtuous reformers, as St. Vincent de Paul, Bourdoise and Olier, walking in the steps of St. Charles Borromeo, re-established ecclesiastical discipline and brought the clergy back to their pristine splendour.

John Baptist De La Salle must be placed side by side with the great geniuses of that famous century, not only for the heroic holiness of his life, but also for the importance of the work to which he consecrated himself, and much more on account of the extraordinary impetus he gave it. Others besides him had occupied themselves with education: Bourdoise, Father Barré, etc., had manifested before him their solicitude for the children of the poor and had organized schools to receive them. But he alone devoted his existence to this all-important work, he alone had the courage to share the life and the labours of those humble schoolmasters, he alone was tenacious enough not to be discouraged by persecution, and, finally, he alone had the grace of success.

God had so clearly traced the way for His servant, that he felt himself powerfully drawn to it on the morrow of his ordination, and he never quitted it. While yet a young priest, he began by assuring the legal existence of the teaching nuns founded by Nicolas Roland.

The following year, he presided over the creation of two gratuitous schools for boys in Rheims. He had not the slightest thought of being a founder, but attached himself to the young masters; through simple charity he brought them to his house, in order the better to help them more immediately; drawn by the very logic of his zeal, he abandoned his rich and comfortable home, and went to share their humble life in a poor house in the neighbourhood. His former condition contrasted with the new one; and yet he sacrificed the former for the latter; he resigned his canonry and sold his goods, in order to be little in the estimation of the world and poor like his companions. Without living with the masters, he might have assisted them with his advice, and supported them with his means; but by so acting he would have personally remained a stranger to the work, he would not have been the foundation of the edifice which Providence wished to raise. Therefore it was not God's will that he should occupy himself only in a secondary manner and for a time with the masters and the schools: it was His will that he should devote himself wholly to the work, that he should break all the bonds that could be an obstacle, and that he should consecrate his life and strength thereto.

John Baptist, being an educator by vocation, did not work on any preconceived plan, but depended on providential indications; under God's sole guidance, he followed a perfectly straight road, and created the institutions which his time precisely needed in the matter of education.

The children of the poor, especially in the large cities, lacked teachers, and not being instructed, they often wallowed in vice and ignorance, and grew up just as

incapable of making a position for themselves in life as they were of practising virtue. John Baptist proposed to remedy this social evil. He opened gratuitous schools for these poor abandoned children; these schools were well disciplined, and in them good conduct and piety were equally enforced, religious and secular instruction went hand in hand and completed each other, rational methods assured the intellectual and moral progress of the children; in this way, those poor children, picked up in the streets, were brought up as men and Christians, society was purified and souls were saved. For the direction of these schools masters were of course necessary, and it became the chief care of John Baptist to form them. By the creation of an Institute of Brothers, he prepared masters for the cities and large towns; by means of normal schools, which he called seminaries for country schoolmasters, he trained teachers for the villages into which he would never consent to put isolated Brothers.

His indefatigable zeal recoiled from no enterprise. He determined to follow the pupils beyond their ordinary school course, and in order to complete their instruction and their religious education, he opened the Sunday classes where hundreds of apprentices and other young workmen found not only protection from the dangers and temptations of the streets, but also wholesome nutriment for heart and mind. He also began at this time to supply a long-felt want in middle class education; to the sons of merchants and manufacturers, for whom the ancient languages were almost useless, and for whom the *petites écoles* were not sufficient, he offered, in well organized boarding schools, that professional formation, which, since his time, has been so exten-

sively spread under the names of higher grade schools or modern secondary education. Confined by his vocation to the work of education, he became a successful initiator therein and its authorized legislator. His name marked, in the history of education, the transition from the old mode to the modern system of education; he was not a simple witness of this transformation, but the principal agent.

The success of his mission of educator was certainly the fruit of grace, for it pleased God to bless the work of His humble servant; but it was also the outcome of the love that he bore his work, for love urged him with such zeal and earnestness, that it could not fail of success. Do you wish to know the love he had for the schools, his pupils and his Brothers? Consider what he sacrificed and suffered for them. He sacrificed his social dignity, his riches, a life of ease and his reputation; he embraced a life of poverty that was austere and mortified, abject and despised; he triumphed over the repugnances of nature, the prejudices of society and education, and even his delicate constitution. He was far from being drawn by nature to the work of the schools; on the contrary, everything within him revolted at the mere idea of such an undertaking, as we learn from his own avowal: it was solely zeal for souls that strengthened his courage in the face of sacrifice, and sustained him in the midst of opposition. Had he been less constant and less persevering, he would have resigned it all in presence of the numberless difficulties he met with. We shall here produce the touching picture in which his biographer has summarized his pains and troubles.

“ At times, he had to protect himself against the

famine; again, it was envy which threatened him with lawsuits; at one time it was injustice robbing him of the legacies made in his favour, or ravaged and disturbed his schools; again it was the tongue of calumny that defamed his reputation and blackened that of his disciples; now it was against the zeal of the promulgators of false doctrine, who made every effort to surprise and ensnare him; again it was the imprudence or the rebellion, or the perfidy of his own disciples; and he found himself obliged to withstand the very protectors of his schools to sustain a work against which the evil spirit had armed all kinds of enemies. Persecution followed him till death, and until death his zeal was invincible; at last he triumphed over all the efforts of hell by his perseverance and self-sacrifice." He never halted on his way, he did not even deviate from it, though he met obstacles at every step: the love he had for his work made him so patient, that he overcame them all.

This love was so much the more powerful as it was more peaceful and clear-sighted: his zeal was never impetuous nor passionate, and therefore it was that he was never discouraged, neither was he ever wanting in prudence; and because he made no mistakes, he finally came off triumphant. Nothing could be more wisely combined than his relations with both masters and pupils.

His schools, being gratuitous, were opened to all; without clashing with the monopoly of the masters of the paying schools, the children of the fairly well to do workmen were, on principle, received on the same footing as the children of the poorest. As soon as these children were admitted to his schools, they were kept to strict discipline, taught by rapid and successful methods,

moralized by the powerful action of silence and the penetrating influence of the spirit of religion; he himself passed frequently among their ranks, encouraging these and reprimanding those, and elevating all their souls to God, by the beaming radiance of his virtue.

He followed the masters in their work with still greater attention and vigilance, often visiting their classes, to assure himself of their fidelity to the rules of pedagogy that he had given them. For, during the period of their formation, he had taught them the method that makes useful masters; he had particularly taught them how to husband their strength, and how to cultivate the good behaviour of the pupils by the example of their own silence. In order to assure their perseverance and to protect them from the temptation of inconstancy, he bound them by vows; and as he did not wish to engage them rashly, he contented himself at first with the vows of obedience and stability, which sufficed for his purpose. Anxious to assure the disinterestedness of the masters, he forbade them to expect or to accept any recompense from men; it was absolutely forbidden to accept any payments either from the pupils or from their parents. He kept both masters and pupils in good working order by means of visits and inspections. In fine, he secured them against all ambition, and particularly against the temptation to change their lives as Brothers for the ecclesiastical state, by forbidding them all such studies as might draw them towards the sanctuary. Let no one blame him for having thus walled up the dwelling where his schoolmasters resided; he made them prisoners, as it were, of a work as holy in the eyes of God as it is great before

men; and if he was able to establish popular education in France, it was because, while forming the masters, he had the wisdom to keep them attached to their humble functions.

HOW EDUCATION WAS IN THE EYES OF JOHN BAPTIST
AN APOSTOLIC FUNCTION

It was as a priest, and not as a teacher, that John Baptist loved his vocation of educator. He saw that the schools were a rich and beautiful field for his apostolate, and the pupils noble souls that he should gain for God. He would have willingly said, with St. Ignatius of Loyola, that he taught human knowledge only that he might have the right of teaching the Christian doctrine.

Let no one however misapprehend his views; they were not narrow in their scope, and justice requires that we here remark that he was not drawn to lessen the man in order the better to form the Christian. He never lost sight of the fact that the Christian, if he is on this earth in order to gain eternal life, can attain his true end but by ploughing his furrow and making his career through the affairs of this world; and that, consequently, the master who would not interest himself in what the child is called to do here below, and who would not prepare him to do his duty as a man in this world, would by the very fact of his negligence, be exposing him to miss the final end to which all Christians are bound to tend. He was too clearsighted, not to see how much it is to the interest of religion that the

most faithful of its children should also be the most capable in human affairs; for the cause of God would very soon be compromised, if what is nowadays called the *social forces*, were a stranger to the Church, and if the Church were composed only of devout men having no social worth.

These ideas certainly baunted the mind of John Baptist when he so wisely planned and drew up the courses of study for his schools and boarding schools; no branch of secular instruction was to be foreign to the Christians whom he desired to form, and he was unable to see how the teaching of science could draw the master from his *rôle* of apostle. At Rheims, his plan from the commencement was to draw the children from ignorance as much as from vice. In Paris the time destined for study was economized by the discipline which fixed the attention of the pupils, and also by reducing the hours devoted to manual work. When he was given charge of the school for young sailors, in the parish of Saint-Laurent, Marseilles, he recommended the Brothers to be very diligent in instructing them, so that they might not thereafter be incapable of filling a suitable position. In the Sunday school that he opened in Paris for young workmen, three fourths of the time were given to drawing and mathematics, so that these young apprentices might be more skillful in their professions; if he devoted the Sunday afternoons to the instruction of these youths, it was because he saw nothing profane in what could develop the value of the human mind. He spared no expense to prepare capable masters to teach these higher branches of education, and his apostolic heart was greatly grieved, when a certain Brother, possessing

very narrow ideas, refused to devote himself to studies which he thought, though of course very erroneously, incompatible with his vocation. The same broad views caused him to conceive and draw up the course of study for the boarding school of Saint-Yon, of which the teaching of our most flourishing schools of modern times seems but a copy.

But whatever may have been his zeal for the teaching of science, we well know that the preponderating preoccupation of his life was to form faithful Christians and to save souls. This predominant thought inspired all his works, caused him to open many new schools, and directed all his instructions to his Brothers. If we read all his books, his *Meditations*, the *Short Treatises*, the *Rules*, the *School Management*, we shall have no difficulty in convincing ourselves that he was always guided by the idea of his apostolate. "Your employment would be of little use", he used to say to the Brothers, "if you had not for end the salvation of souls... God, by calling you to the work in which you are engaged, has destined you to be the spiritual fathers of the children whom you instruct." By means of the most exalted considerations, he pointed out to the masters the dignity of their functions: "Thank God for the grace of having made you a participator, by your state, in the ministry of the holy apostles and the chief bishops and pastors of the Church. The thought that you are the ministers of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the Church, ought to urge you to have great zeal in your state."

And besides this, he distinctly declared to the Brothers that the salvation of souls was the only end of their vocation: "It is only with this end in view", he

repeated to them, “ that you have engaged yourselves to the care and guidance of children. Act in such a manner that you may be able to say what Jesus Christ said concerning the sheep whose shepherd He was : “ I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly ; because it is the ardent zeal that you have for the salvation of the souls of those whom you instruct, that has made you undertake to devote yourselves unreservedly to the work of their Christian education, and to consecrate thereto your whole existence to procure them the life of grace in this world, and in the next, life eternal. ”

The Saint has traced in his *Rules* the path to be followed by the Brothers to attain the end of their vocation ; above all, they are to watch over the virtue of the children. “ The spirit of their Institute ”, he says, “ consists in an ardent zeal for the instruction of children, and for bringing them up in the fear of God, inducing them to preserve their innocence if they have not lost it, and inspiring them with a great aversion and horror for sin and whatever might cause them to lose purity. In order to enter into this spirit, the Brothers of the Society shall strive by prayer, instruction, and by their vigilance and good conduct in school, to procure the salvation of the children confided to their care, bringing them up in piety and in a truly Christian spirit, that is, according to the rules and maxims of the Gospel. ”

He reminds the Brothers of the great responsibility that weighs on them in this matter, when he says : “ One of the principal motives that ought to animate your zeal in reprovng and correcting the faults of your disciples is, that should you omit to do so, you would

render yourselves responsible before God for these very faults, and He would punish your cowardice and negligence with regard to your pupils; because, holding the place of their fathers, and mothers, and pastors, you should watch over them, as being to render an account of their souls. ”

Sound religious instruction is not of less importance than moral preservation in the formation of Christians; because, sooner or later, and even after the most serious disorders, man returns to the path traced out for him by his convictions. The man of strong, enlightened faith remains a Christian in the bottom of his heart, even when he sins; lost virtue is often the cause of irreparable ruin to those in whose souls faith is not deeply rooted by a profound knowledge of religion. Therefore our Saint was most exact that the Brothers should thoroughly instruct their scholars in the truths of religion... “ You are obliged by your vocation to teach the truths of faith to your pupils, and to instruct them in their religion. You should devote yourselves to this entirely, and give your life, should it be necessary, to acquit yourselves faithfully of this duty. ”

In order that the masters might become efficient teachers of religion, he made it a duty for them to study catechism every day. Having acquired a thorough knowledge of the Christian doctrine, they were to teach it daily to their scholars in class. “ If you ”, said the Saint, “ who have succeeded the apostles in the duty of catechising and instructing the poor, wish your ministry to be useful to the Church, you must teach them the catechism every day, so that they may learn the fundamental truths of their religion. ” He did not wish that this instruction should be imparted in “ high studied

language, " but in terms clear and easily understood. Besides the daily instruction in catechism, the good master will cause religious truths to be relished by making them pervade all his conversations and even in teaching the human sciences.

In order to plant the faith deeper and more firmly in the soul, the master will strengthen it with religious practices, prayers, frequentation of the sacraments, etc., which he will recommend with great care to his disciples. And to the Brother who shall have faithfully carried out this programme of the apostle of education, the Saint promises the most glorious recompense : " Oh ! " said he, " what a glory it will be for those who shall have instructed youth, when their zeal and application to procure the salvation of the children shall be published before all mankind, and when heaven shall resound with the acclamations of thanks that these blessed children will render to those who taught them the path to heaven ! "

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FOUNDER

However nobly ambitious John Baptist De La Salle's zeal, Providence as we have already remarked, limited its action, in order that its results might be more thorough and more prolific. Not only was it enclosed within the field of education, but even here, it was to be devoted to a special end and object, the forming of Christian and religious masters. This task was all the more arduous and important as the masters were not to be simple teachers but Religious also; so that to the mission of a director of a normal school, which forms teachers capable to direct schools, there was added, for our Saint, the mission of founding an Order, charged with the initiation of souls in the Christian virtues and religious perfection, and to assure the perpetuity of his apostolic work by the organizing of an Institute. As founder, he gave more scope and durability to his apostleship of education by peopling hundreds of the classes of the Brothers and Christian lay teachers with pupils, than if he had devoted his life to some single charity

school in the city. It was in this way that Jesus Christ, who came for the salvation of all men, prepared for the conversion of the universe by the formation of His disciples and the founding of a teaching Church, though He himself converted but few souls during the three years of His apostolate.

HOW THE FOUNDER ALLOWED HIMSELF
TO BE GUIDED BY PROVIDENCE

John Baptist had not sought the title of founder; Providence made use of him to accomplish its designs without his knowledge and almost against his will. In imitation of St. Vincent De Paul, he only adapted himself to the great works that it pleased God to carry out by his means, as we learn from his own humble avowal, as well as from the history of his life.

He wrote : " I never entertained the slightest thought of it; and had I known that the care I took of the schoolmasters, out of mere charity, would result in my living with them, I should have abandoned the work. " Towards the end of his long career, he said to MM. Gense and De La Cocherie : " If God had allowed me to see the good that the Institute could procure, and, at the same time, had shown me the difficulties and crosses that should accompany it, my courage would have failed me; and far from having charged myself with it, I should not have dared to touch it with the ends of my fingers. "

He was only thinking of fulfilling his duties as Canon in obscurity, when Madam Maillefer sent Nyel to him in 1679, and no sooner had he arranged for the establish-

ing of the school of Saint-Maurice, than he discreetly withdrew as from a work that was not his. If the founding of the school of Saint-Jacques shortly after caused him to leave his retreat, it was only for such time as was absolutely necessary, and when it was done, he returned promptly to his solitude. How different his conduct from that of so many restless and presumptuous men, who meddle with every undertaking! But it pleases God to pursue those souls, who would hide themselves through humility. John Baptist vainly tried to efface himself; God discovered him, and brought him back to the schools and to the masters by the irresistible inclination of charity.

It was, in fact, nothing but sheer charity that urged our Saint to assist the young masters of Rheims; he saw them abandoned as sheep without a shepherd, and he strove to bring them together in the same exercises of piety. To have them more conveniently under his care, he at first lodged them near his own mansion, then admitted them to his table, and finally sheltered them under his own roof. Thus, he almost imperceptibly contracted bonds of intimacy, we would almost say friendship, with the teachers of the poor. When his natural brothers had been removed from his control, he understood that the schoolmasters were to be his future family: a family of a different rank, for which the rich mansion of the rue Sainte-Marguerite would be unsuitable, and which he must lodge in a more humble and retired dwelling in the district. John Baptist had not yet a very clear idea of the future, when, on June 24th 1682, he transferred his little community to the house in the rue Neuve; he was simply ready to follow the indications of Providence with docility.

The following year, he clearly showed his determination not to shrink from any sacrifice by the resignation of his canonicate and the distribution of the proceeds of his patrimony to the poor.

The birth of the Institute seemed to be the reward for this double renunciation : for the first organization dated from the retreat of the general assembly of 1684; twelve masters made the vow of obedience, the great outlines of the Rule were decreed, the society assumed the name of Brothers of the Christian Schools, and soon, the choice of a religious habit signalized to the outer world the existence of a new Institute.

The foundation was however far from being definitive. The Institute, between the years 1684 and 1717, was tossed like a frail bark on an ever tempestuous ocean, favoured by times with a genial breeze which sped it along the path of progress, but oftener beaten by violent storms in which it all but foundered. It even seemed that difficulties became greater and more numerous, in proportion to the development of the work. In 1692, the Institute was so much weakened by death and the defection of members, that John Baptist had great difficulty in finding two Brothers who would vow with him to uphold the charity schools, even should they be under the necessity of begging their bread. In 1702, there commenced a long period of mistrust, not to say persecution, on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities; the founder was deposed, and an essential article of his Rule was violated by the nomination of a superior who was not a Brother. In 1712, the Châtelet pronounced the judgments that defamed John Baptist; he, in his humility, looked upon himself as justly condemned, and, believing that the Brothers of the North

had separated from him, he left Paris in order to visit the schools of the South : after thirty-five years of toilsome labour, he thought his work was broken up, even ruined. So many severe trials were surely unnecessary to make him believe that the Institute was in God's hands, and that God was the founder and guardian of it much more than he. He put all his hope in God alone; and from the moment that he attached himself to God, his confidence was never shaken, so that he never had after this an hour of real discouragement.

Though God guided the Institute along safe paths through so many trials, yet its very existence was, humanly speaking, always uncertain and threatened. This is why John Baptist, despite his great confidence in God, was in no hurry to have the Congregation approved by Rome, nor to solicit for it Letters Patent from the King. He questioned himself whether a work that was so persecuted, and, in appearance, so unstable, was worthy of the attention of the constituted authorities? Nevertheless, in 1700, he prepared for a tentative in Rome, by sending two Brothers there; but Brother Gabriel Drolin's inexperience, and the attacks that soon shook the Institute in Paris, were not of a nature to forward the interests of the Brothers, and so John Baptist had not the consolation of obtaining the Bull of Approbation of his work.

Yet he had the joy of verifying, two years before his death, that the storms had only made his Institute strike deeper root; for the ninety-nine professed Brothers of the twenty-two houses then in existence, were animated with the same feelings and aspirations, and had the same love for their dear founder, and would unanimously adhere to the decisions of the general

assembly at Saint-Yon, charged to elect the first Brother Superior General. It may therefore be truly said that the Institute was founded in 1717; after having emerged from one of the most violent storms that it had ever passed through, it appeared built on a solid rock. John Baptist, on his retiring into the silence and modesty of a simple religious, recognized with admiration that God had guided all to a happy conclusion.

Though he generously lent himself by work and sacrifice to the divine action, yet he always considered himself as an unworthy instrument in so noble an enterprise. Throughout his whole life, he tried to avoid not work, but honour and esteem. The office of superior was such a burden for his humility, that from the year 1686 he did not cease to long for the lowest rank. His ardent desires were gratified only two years before his death; but to be revenged for so long a term of office, he tried to bury his name in oblivion, by ordering that he should not be reckoned among the superiors of the Institute, and that the Brother who was elected in 1717 should be named the first Superior. By this pious requirement, which has not removed one ray from his glory, he no doubt wished to say that he had done nothing but according to the impulsion and under the guidance of Providence.

HOW JOHN BAPTIST CARED FOR THE MEMBERS
OF HIS INSTITUTE

If John Baptist humbly confessed that he was only the instrument of God in the foundation of the Institute, he however worked at its establishment with all the activity of his rich nature and with all the resources of grace with which his soul was filled. Far from remaining a simple passive instrument in the hands of God, he worked for the sanctification of the Brothers as ardently as if their spiritual progress depended upon his personal efforts alone.

He devoted his time and his heart to them. From his first interview with Nyel in 1679 till his last breath, he belonged exclusively to the Brothers, living with them, working for them; he never quitted this work which he loved so dearly, in order to occupy himself with the care of externs; if other souls profited by his generous zeal, it was because they came to him to seek the graces of which he was the faithful guardian. From the very outset, his heart was bound to the humble masters whom Providence had led to him, and nothing could turn it from them. With what gentle tenderness he received those young souls, as charming in their simplicity as they were ready in making sacrifices! With what solicitude he formed them, corrected their faults with fatherly kindness, guided their souls to the highest virtues, and trained them with the trusty hand of a master for the difficult task of educators! With what unceasing fidelity he followed their efforts in

school, encouraged them, reanimated their fervour, consoled them in the inevitable disenchantments of life! The weak, even when they deserted him, bore away with them his sympathy, so great was the difficulty he felt in being separated from those whom he once loved. He possessed the heart and soul of a true shepherd.

His dear disciples were ever present to his thoughts, and it was for them he so often prolonged his prayers. Those countless hours that he devoted to mental prayer were not lost time for the Institute; in those silent, secluded recesses to which he betook himself, he found God and treated with Him of the interests of his children. Long vigils, rigorous fasts, bloody disciplines, corporal sufferings, the chalice of humiliation which he drank to the very dregs, all these were for them. According to the saying of his Master, " he sanctified himself for them. " If the vital sap flowed in streams through the rising tree of the Institute, if its roots took firm hold in the soil, and if it sent its branches high and wide into the air, if it withstood the most violent storms, and if its vigour continued to increase, let this not surprise us : it was because the founder, who was the powerful trunk, possessed and distributed the abundant store of life which he received from God by penance and prayer.

What efficacious influence he had on his disciples !

He was indeed desirous to see their numbers increase but without anxiety. If he did not go in search of subjects as Adrian Nyel did, he received with open arms all who presented themselves. All did not persevere; but he jealously watched that no vocation should be lost through any negligence of his. He kindly received piously inclined youths who came to him, and if they were too

young to be admitted to the Novitiate proper, he put them into a kind of Junior Novitiate, a true nursery, where he paternally watched over their physical and their moral growth. About the age of fifteen or sixteen, he gave them the holy habit and admitted them to the Novitiate : there, they continued to be the objects of his most assiduous care and attention.

Though thoroughly convinced of the necessity of a real Novitiate, John Baptist was slow in organizing it, and he did so only when circumstances became favourable. Previous to 1682, the young men recruited by Nyel had no idea of becoming religious ; John Baptist was satisfied with preparing them for their functions by means of a good spiritual retreat and by wholesome counsels as to the manner of directing their classes. From 1682, the epoch of his arrival at the rue Neuve, he subjected the masters to a longer term of formation, during which they devoted themselves both to exercises of piety and to intellectual work. In 1684, when the first twelve Brothers had made the vow of obedience, and the Institute had commenced to be on a solid footing, the Saint took in hands the establishing of a Novitiate, properly so called ; exercises of piety and acts of mortification had a conspicuous place in the daily routine, and profane studies were relegated to the background ; however, the needs of the schools did not perhaps permit that the novices should pass the whole year in exercises proper to the novitiate, without any exterior occupation. They did their best, however, strictly to observe the canonical rule relative to this capital point. Though the Novitiate was yet only imperfectly organized, it had nevertheless rendered eminent services to the Institute, when, about the year 1690, it failed through

the inexperience of Brother Jean-Henri, who had charge of it.

John Baptist hastened to re-establish it; but he succeeded only in the month of September 1692. The house at Vaugirard that had been opened a year before for the Brothers as a place of recollection and of well-merited repose, then became the Novitiate of the Institute. From this time, John Baptist neglected nothing to make his Novitiate conform to the rules, and be animated with the purest religious spirit. As to the direction to give it, he took his first inspiration in the canons; then he consulted the masters of the spiritual life, from Cassian and the Fathers of the Desert down to the most modern founders and reformers, such as St. Ignatius and St. Teresa. The hours of the day were devoted to prayer and the divine office, reading and spiritual conferences, manual work and some preparatory exercises suitable for a teacher's mission. Thanks to this course, the Novitiate became in reality a place of moral and religious formation, where prayer and mortification held the first place.

The Novitiate was always to our Saint the dearest and most sacred portion of the Institute. So he undertook himself the task of forming the young religious. Even when he had appointed a Director of novices, he still continued to live with them; when duty no longer required him elsewhere, he returned immediately to his dear flock. Happy flock, living under the care of such a shepherd! He excited such enthusiasm for piety and virtue by his example and exhortation, that his Novitiate had nothing to envy from the most fervent communities : mental prayer was as punctual and regular as among the Carmelites, and mortification as

rigorous as that of the Trappists. There issued from this sanctifying retreat strongly tempered souls, devoted to the cause of God and well armed for the battle of life.

This moral strength and courage enabled the young masters to face the difficulties inseparable from a mission that is as ungrateful as it is all-important, and not to succumb, in the long run, under the burden of too heavy a load. But the founder, as a prudent man, too well knew what disappointments and weariness await a Brother during the first years of his ministry, not to provide for so critical a period : lukewarmness in piety, relaxation in mortification, discouragement in the toilsome labours of the schools, the painful frictions arising from such great difference in characters, — all these he had foreseen.

The novitiate is the tilt-yard where the future soldier prepares himself for the battle that will have to be waged after the novitiate has terminated. John Baptist had too much love for his children not to interest himself in the hour of their real danger. For this reason he was with them in their schools : he often paid them personal visits, and then, in private, he would pour into their hearts the encouraging balm of an advice that was at once loving and supernatural ; he used to call them into his presence, and would direct their retreat of eight days, during which time many wounds were healed, and cooled ardour rekindled ; in fine, he kept himself in constant touch with his children by means of frequent correspondence, and was always ready to listen to them, console them and lead them back on the right path, if they had swerved from it.

This correspondence, however incomplete, is the most striking expression that remains to us of the soul

of the Saint. It should not be allowed to perish, because it contains solutions that are always new of the doubts and difficulties that belong to all times. "You are right", he wrote to a Brother, "in saying that the reflections you make, now and then, on the difficulties of your state, are only tricks of the demon, who seeks to discourage you and hinder you from bearing with love the trials which you find therein... "I do not know", he said to another, "why you did not discover to me sooner the temptation that you have had; do you not know that the evil, when made known to the physician, is already half cured?"... "I am very happy", he said on another occasion, "that you have recovered from the wretched state in which you were for so long a time, and that you are aware of the change that God has wrought in you; I can assure you that nothing gives me greater joy than to learn that those with whose direction I am charged valiantly walk in the path of justice."

Are there not at all times poor, tried souls for whom such words as the above are a striking reality? In this manner, the founder still lives among his children, and the same solicitude which he had for his religious is still exercised from beyond the tomb.

WITH WHAT RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS JOHN BAPTIST
FORMED THE SOUL OF HIS INSTITUTE

The unremitting influence of John Baptist on the Brothers infused into them all the spirit and the grace with which he himself was filled. For, being predestined by vocation to be a founder, he had been endowed

with the plenitude of the life that should animate all the members of the Institute. In God's designs, the founder of a Religious Order must be and must continue to be the soul of his Congregation : all those who receive movement and life from him are his; to escape from his influence would be to court sterility and death.

What may be called the soul of a founder is something very complex ; it is composed of the elements of the religious life to which, in his work, he has given a preponderating importance, and which constitute, by the very fact, the moral characteristic of the Congregation. John Baptist De La Salle had too clear an understanding and too much decision of will, not to give his Institute a well defined character, not only as to the end he had in view which was the Christian education of children by means of the school, but also as to the spirit that should animate it, the spirit of faith, of piety, of mortification and obedience.

He declares in his Rule that the spirit of faith is the chief constituent element of his Institute. The Brothers shall have a pure doctrine; they shall be guided in all things, not by the maxims of the false wisdom of the world, but by the light and sentiments of faith. They shall look upon nothing but with the eyes of faith, and they shall do nothing but in view of God and for God. They shall adore God in men and in events: they shall listen to God in the superiors who guide them, and they shall serve God in the children whom they instruct; they shall attribute all things, favourable or unfavourable, to God, saying with holy Job: " The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. " John Baptist well knew that a soul thus governed by faith is ready for every sacrifice and the most generous efforts. The soul,

carried on the wings of faith, escapes all the suggestions of the flesh and the attractions of the world, triumphs over interior weariness and is not discouraged by contradictions. Could a more powerful element of life be infused into religious whose entire existence must be absorbed by the ungrateful and monotonous work of the schools?

But faith soon languishes and becomes inactive, if it is not kept alive and strengthened at the lifegiving source of piety. For this purpose, exercises of piety hold the first place in the daily life of a Brother. Experience had, in fact, taught John Baptist the happy fruits of piety. The Brother, so long as he is pious, will love his state, will have a taste for his occupations, will live in union of heart and soul with God, and will burn with love for souls. Should he grow lax in piety, at once he loses all his ardour, is depressed and succumbs; and very likely he will lose his vocation entirely. Do not then be surprised, do not regret that the chief duty of a Brother is prayer and meditation during a great part of the time that is left him after his austere occupations: he reposes himself, and refreshes his soul by prayer, after which he feels himself more courageous for his work. Without doubt, study would enlarge his mind and increase his stock of knowledge; but should he neglect to renew his moral power by prayer, profane knowledge alone would not lighten his burden, and, having less taste for his humble functions, he would, on that account, be a less useful educator. It is the masterpiece of John Baptist to have known how to nourish the souls of his religious teachers by means of vocal and mental prayer, without suppressing study.

But one takes delight in the living source of grace from on high only in proportion as one is detached from terrestrial joys and pleasures; as much as prayer springs spontaneously from the heart when we suffer, so it ceases to pass our lips when we delight in wordly pleasures. So, John Baptist was right in keeping his religious to the practices of mortification; he was convinced that by this means their intercourse with God in piety would be easier and more consoling. There was still another motive that induced him to urge them on the austere way of penance. Accustomed to chastise their bodies and curb their wills, the Brothers were ready for the hard labours and the painful duties of the humble teachers of youth. The burden of the Lord is sweet to those who know how to subdue their inordinate passions; but how heavy and insupportable to those who follow their caprices and indulge their sensuality! It is true that macerations or corporal inflictions are not of obligation for the Brothers; but their rule of life which keeps them occupied at every moment with some definite duty, is not the less severe. A fruitful austerity which sustains them in their vocation by keeping them to a life of sacrifice.

Of all the practices of mortification, obedience is the hardest, because it subjugates the will; but it is also the most efficacious, because by means of the will, it seizes the whole being. Obedience is so essential to the religious life, that every Congregation imposes it on its members. John Baptist regarded obedience as the indispensable binding link in a community, so he permitted the Brothers to make the vow, in the year 1684. Through prudence, and considering the precarious state of his Institute, he was satisfied with this single

vow and did not permit the Brothers to make the other two vows of religion; during his life, they added but the vow of stability which is the corollary of the vow of obedience.

Obedience obliges the Brother to submit himself, as all other religious, to the will of his Superior General and to that of his local Director; but it presents this peculiar characteristic in the Institute, that it keeps the Brothers constantly in the state of community. A Brother is never alone; on his journeys, he generally has a companion; there are never fewer than two Brothers in a school; when in class, he works in constant fellowship with his Brothers; the exercises of piety are performed in a common oratory; recreation is taken in company with his Brothers. A religious of this Institute thus finds in his equals so many vigilant supports, and passes his life in perpetual submission. But what a safe asylum for virtue is this community life! What a support for ordinary wills is this universal dependence! Brilliantly gifted natures are not kept down, and the less talented, who are the most numerous in the great family of humanity, find therein excellent means for development.

Such were the elements that formed the spirit of the founder; such ought to be the life of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. He who, by lively faith, ardent piety, constant mortification and perfect obedience, shall have realized in his person this ideal of the perfect religious, will infallibly be a zealous educator in his school, and will surely be blessed by God.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE INSTITUTE

John Baptist De La Salle, a man of faith and zeal, was also a man of government. If he had the gift of kindling the love of God in souls, and of exciting them to devotedness, he was not less clever in the organizing of a religious society and of directing its development. Calm, thoughtful, clear-sighted, methodic in his plans and firm in his decisions, he was born to found and direct a Congregation. Indeed, his Institute bears the visible impression of a clear mind and a resolute will. His Rule was drawn up with so much wisdom, and shows such little trace of the times in which it was written, that it guides the Brothers of to-day with no less precision than it did those of two hundred years ago.

It is not the least of his merits to have clearly defined the *role* of the Institute. The Brothers shall be occupied with education alone. At the same time that the Brothers will give the children the human knowledge suitable to their condition, they shall teach them the truths of religion and watch over their virtue : in a word, they shall endeavour to make them good Christians. They shall devote themselves above all to the poor; and that none may be refused admittance to the schools, they shall be gratuitous schools, that is to say, no school fees shall be paid either by the parents or by the children. The children of the working classes also shall be received, provided that the gratuitousness of the schools be not violated; in this way the Saint very much enlarged the circle of his school population. He

made it larger still by the creation of the Sunday schools and the foundation of the boarding school of Saint-Yon: in the Sunday schools, he inaugurated the works of the continuation schools and the classes for adults; at Saint-Yon, he founded, in favour of the sons of merchants and tradesmen, a new system of practical education. The resources from the boarding school were in part to sustain the works of the Novitiate. From this sphere of action, circumscribed by the founder himself, the Brothers have never departed; and this exact delimitation, by facilitating their fidelity to the traditions of their Institute, has been their strength.

The same decision reigns throughout the general discipline, that is to say, in the fundamental rules laid down to establish good order in the Institute.

Nothing was dearer to the heart of the founder than the principle of the gratuitousness of the schools. This is clearly explained by circumstances. As the primary end of the Institute was to withdraw poor children from ignorance and vice, the very fact of opening schools for them required that they should be gratuitous.

It is a no less positive article that no member of the Institute shall be either a priest or a cleric. The founder, a priest himself, did not at first have the idea of not admitting priests into the Institute; his humility even prompted him to prepare a Brother, Henri L'Heureux, for Holy Orders, hoping that he might replace him in the office of superior. But the Brother's premature death, in 1690, appeared to him as a sign of the divine will, and from that time he promulgated the absolute principle which excludes priests and clerics from the Institute. He looked on himself as being an anomaly in the Society; and therefore it was that he made repeat-

ed efforts that a Brother should become superior of the Institute, and that while he himself was still living.

He was not less categorical with regard to community life. He held it as a fact of experience that religious in community protect one another and excite one another to good. Being thus convinced, he never permitted that a Brother should be alone; he always placed at least two Brothers in each school; he even preferred the cities to the large boroughs, because the classes being more numerous in the former, the members of the community would be numerous in proportion. Even in the community itself, a Brother never has an instant of complete solitude. This common life is a blessed preservative against the many surprises of human weakness.

The exercise of authority is efficacious and without complication. Each Brother depends on the Director of the house in which he lives and on the Superior General; he can have recourse to the Superior whenever he wishes to do so; and at least twice a year, he must communicate with him on his dispositions and difficulties. If, by reason of the large number of subjects, the Superior has to be aided under ordinary circumstances by his Assistants, he is not less the father always ready and disposed to receive the communications of his children.

The Rule reigns supreme over all the members of the Institute. The same to-day as when it came forth from the hands of the founder, it does not impose a tyrannical burden, but rather provides as a mother for the different wants of the religious whom it conducts.

It takes care of their health, for it is to avoid all

disastrous extra fatigue that, not content with prescribing daily recreations and weekly walks, it forbids the Brothers to undertake works that are foreign to the duties of their state. It carefully distinguishes the austerity of every day life which is salutary, from excess of labour, which is an abuse of physical strength.

It assures the maintenance of the religious life by means of piety. It places a Brother every day in an atmosphere of recollection, of union with God, and of moral elevation : every hour is enveloped in a net of vocal or mental prayer ; and, when the prayer is terminated, there comes a reading to prepare the soul for further prayer.

It exercises an uninterrupted vigilance over moral virtue, because it keeps the community severely guarded against all communication with the world, and it preserves a Brother from the great dangers of isolation and abandonment. Thanks to the Rule, a Brother is unacquainted with the world, and is unknown by it ; but at the same time, the common life delivers him from that frightful void in which he runs the risk of being disheartened. In this just equilibrium of solitude and of activity, the religious is enabled to control himself, and the practice of virtue is rendered easier.

However, and in spite of all, weariness is possible, and has been provided for. To protect himself against its fatal effects, a Brother has several means at his disposal ; without speaking of the help he derives from the powerful influence of the confessor, he has the advice of his Brother Director, to whom he gives each week an account of his condition ; then he is encouraged by the Brother Visitor, who reanimates his zeal in the practice of his duties ; his correspondence with the

Assistant or the Superior will be of great help to him, and, finally, he will have the invaluable exercises of the annual retreat.

Moreover, a Brother does not undertake his mission of educator before having been accustomed to govern himself under the beneficent authority of the Rules. A fervent novitiate has revealed to him his faults, trained him to overcome himself, and caused him to take up the practices of prayer and mortification which will be his safety.

During the period of formation, and particularly during the year following the novitiate, he learned the art of being a good master. For the founder desired that, in this important mission, a Brother shall not lack either knowledge or experience : he sometimes incurred great expense so that the Brothers might be made more competent to teach the several branches of the programme; before putting them in charge of children, he did not fail to enlighten them on their duties by means of wise and practical pedagogic directions.

And, as if it had not been sufficient to have foreseen all and to have organized all by the Rules, he still lives in his books and precepts, which accompany his disciples from generation to generation, as they followed them in the beginning, from school to school. All his writings are practical, and reveal his character of founder. He very carefully edited books of piety for his religious children, such as the Method of Mental Prayer and subjects of meditation suitable to their state. For the use of the professors, he wrote schoolbooks and treatises on school management. Thus nothing was left to chance, all was regulated in this edifice erected by the hands of John Baptist De La Salle.

JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE AS A RELIGIOUS

However admirable John Baptist was as a legislator, he touches the heart much more by his religious fidelity. Nothing imparted more authority to the founder's words than his example of humble submission to the Rules: for no one showed himself a simple Brother of the Christian Schools more than he.

He could have devoted himself, like so many other apostolic men, to the work of the schools and even have founded a teaching Congregation without abandoning the duties of his ecclesiastical ministry. But he did not consent to direct from without the Institute which God created by his hands; he desired to live and die in the Society. It was therefore a great subject of edification to see a Canon of an illustrious cathedral resign his canonry and descend to the level of humble schoolmasters, to see a rich priest sacrifice his fortune to dwell with men who were poor and unknown. There were occasions when he seemed to regret that his title of priest distinguished him too much from the Brothers; and though glad he was of his priestly state to ascend the altar, yet he tried to make others forgetful of it and loved to take the last place in the community. In associating thus with his disciples, he more surely filled their hearts with his own spirit and life: his soul reached and more effectively vivified all souls.

Having once entered his adopted family, he never had the slightest thought of leaving it. He was the first to make the vow of obedience in 1684, and every year he

renewed it. In 1691, when the Institute appeared to be on the very brink of ruin, he and two faithful disciples bound themselves never to abandon the work of the schools, even should they be obliged to beg their bread. As we have already remarked, his resolution never flagged in the presence of difficulties ; he was sometimes betrayed from within, often persecuted from without, and in spite of all, he loved his Institute, and worked therein without the least discouragement.

As a man of community, he was never so happy as when in the midst of his religious family. He absented himself but very rarely, and then only for some very grave reason ; and he returned promptly and joyfully. He avoided dining out ; the Bishop of Chartres, who wished to keep him for a day on a certain occasion, had to close the doors of his palace and make him his prisoner. During his stay at Grenoble, he kept aloof from the excellent friends he had in that city, fearing that he might thus be deprived too long of community life. No matter what happiness he enjoyed in his retreat at the Grande-Chartreuse, he remained there only three days, because it was not his community. The Brothers' house at Mende was so small that it could not afford a room for a passing visitor : at least he spent whole days there and took his meals with the Brothers. It is true that he lived five months at Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, out of his community ; but at that time he was no longer Superior, and his humility made him believe that his presence would be embarrassing for his successor, while his spirit of faith persuaded him that his prayers and penances were of much more use to his Institute.

In this interior community life that was so dear to

him, what wholesome example did he not give of the most scrupulous fidelity to the regulations! Everything distinguished him from the others: his birth, his education, his sacrifices, his sacerdotal character, his title of founder; but he did not wish to be distinguished from them in anything. In 1684, he adopted the common fare at table, to do which he was obliged to make war on a rebellious stomach. Raillery did not stop him from taking the habit of the Brothers; when M. Baudrand made him resume, in Paris, the soutane and cape in place of the robe of coarse cloth, he did not fail to add to them the mantle with pendent sleeves, in order clearly to show that he was one of the Brothers. As to other things, he distinguished himself only by extraordinary punctuality in the accomplishment of all religious duties.

He was the first at all the exercises. No amount of fatigue could cause him to omit the meditation in common; even when he had passed the night in prayer, he was faithful to this rendezvous of the morning. If he returned from a journey worn out and covered with perspiration, he went at once and took his place in the community, and participated in the exercise that had already begun. He took his share, like all the Brothers, in the manual work, and there was nothing too menial that he was not ready to do in his turn. As long as he was Superior, he feared he had not practised the vow of obedience well enough, and he gave himself up to the least prescriptions of the Rules with the most scrupulous exactness.

On two occasions, during his religious life, he considered himself happy, because then he was not obliged to command; this short season of happiness was in 1684

and 1717. With what joy he then gave himself to the practice of obedience! He would do nothing without permission, in order to have the satisfaction of being dependent on a superior, and the mere shadow of a fault furnished him the glad pretext to make his accusation in the presence of all the Brothers. If ever the thought entered his mind that he had been Superior, it was to obliterate all recollection of the fact in the minds of others; for, on all occasions, he would put himself in the lowest place, and, when at table, he wished to place himself below the last of the Serving Brothers.

Such striking lessons were not lost on the Brothers. Not content with simply admiring him, they felt themselves drawn to follow his example. In the presence of such acts of virtue, who would not have blushed at his own irregularity? The living Rule of the community, John Baptist did more by his example of religious holiness than by all his exhortations and books for the solid foundation of the Institute.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DESTINY OF HIS WORK

When John Baptist De La Salle died on April 7th 1719, the tomb was destined to receive but the body of the founder. His work remained; and that work, into which he had infused his own spirit to repletion, was to grow and, so to speak, prolong his life. By a mysterious contrast, as much as it had been persecuted during the mortal life of the founder, so much was it protected both by God and by men after he had been received into his heavenly home. Once more, it has been shown that, for each one, the present life is a time of infirmities, of warfare and of merit; it is only in the bosom of God, that with the plenitude of life, our influence attains its apogee, and that our works are crowned with full success.

At the time of the death of John Baptist, his work was very unpretentious. About one hundred poor teachers, a few charity schools, one boarding school, as yet no official recognition either by the Church or by the State, a nearly total absence of notoriety : such was the social condition of the Institute in 1719. But this frail sapling,

that had not yet attracted the attention of any one, was nevertheless planted in rich soil; it contained within it a powerful vitality; it was to grow into a majestic tree, the branches of which were to spread far and wide, and its renown was to illustrate the name of the pious priest who lavished on it the first cares. It now remains for us to describe the salient characteristics of the successful development of the work of John Baptist De La Salle.

IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

During the eighteenth century, the Institute advanced with sure step along the road of progress. When the Revolution broke out, it counted approximately : 121 communities in France and 6 in foreign countries, 1000 Brothers and 36000 pupils. It had not swerved from the line traced by the founder : gratuitous schools had always been its chief object, and the boarding schools, from six to ten, held only the second place.

The teaching in the *petites écoles* did not remain stationary; for they were directed by masters better and better formed. Scholasticates were opened where the young Brothers, having completed their novitiate, came to develop their instruction and to receive lessons on pedagogy. The *Management of the Schools*, written by the founder, was enlarged or modified, according to the indications of experience, the better to perfect the methods or to adapt its counsels to circumstances. In his commentary on the *Twelve virtues of a good master*, Brother Agathon gave an excellent treatise on education. Schoolbooks were multiplied, and enlarged the pro-

gramme of primary studies, by facilitating the task of both master and pupil.

But it was in the domain of higher elementary teaching that progress was the most apparent. Here, nearly all had to be created. New social conditions commenced to demand a change in the intellectual education of youth : the sons of merchants, tradesmen and extensive farmers, required something else than classics. The universities and the religious teaching Orders, bound by traditions in which routine had a part, lent themselves with great difficulty to this new order of things; the Brothers, on the contrary, either because the youthfulness of their Institute rendered it more supple, or because classical teaching was foreign to them, had a free field for the new demands, and, without the least hesitation, they responded to the circumstances.

Boarding schools were opened in several cities and towns, notably at Angers, Nantes, Nîmes and Saint-Omer; the modern programmes of Saint-Yon were at once introduced and followed in all these schools. A commercial school for the perfecting of writing, the teaching of advanced arithmetic, of book-keeping by single and double entry, and of foreign exchange, was opened at Boulogne-sur-Mer; hydrography and drawing were soon after added. The teaching of agriculture was begun at Cherbourg, where the Brothers gave the use of their garden to the pupils, in order to teach them methods of cultivation. Canon Bertrand De Latour established a public library at Montauban which was confided to the Brothers : the books were lent gratis, and an annual allowance was paid to the Brother who had charge of registering the borrowing and the returning of the books in circulation. Thus the Brothers

lent a willing hand to tentatives whence sprang so many vast institutions in the following century.

Their development attests the great activity of the interior life; because rich vegetation is always an indication and the effect of the powerful pressure of the sap. The Brothers assuredly had this principle of fruitfulness from the divine blessing: but they also owed it to their manner of life, which was likewise a gift from God. Men of order, of discipline and tradition, they were all united in their obedience to the same Rules and to the same superiors. They counted among them many distinguished men: their works live but their names are already forgotten by the world. There are however two names among the Superiors General that ought to be remembered: Brother Timothée and Brother Agathon. Brother Timothée, one of the founder's most cherished disciples, presided with as much wisdom as firmness over the early development of the Institute; Brother Agathon, a man of superior intelligence, as clever a man of business as he was a patrôn of higher studies, displayed so much wisdom and enterprise during his generalate that, apart from the founder, no other hand has left a more profound trace in the Institute. The strength of the Brothers is due to their attachment to their traditions. One of them wrote: "We carry with us our Rules, our method and manner of proceeding; for if we possess the relics of our saintly founder, we more jealously preserve his spirit." Custom was respected, when its origin could be traced up to the founder himself. For a still greater reason, care was taken not to encroach on the essential principles. The gratuitousness of the schools was maintained in a number of towns, notably at Boulogne and Toulon, but by the energy of

the Superiors : the Brothers willingly condemned themselves to extremes of poverty, rather than adopt the practice of requiring school fees.

In proportion as the Institute grew and extended, and as the Brothers signalized themselves for their piety and devotedness, they gained the good will of the people, which proved a solid support to their work. This support was much strengthened by the assistance of the Church and State.

About six years after the death of John Baptist, Benedict XIII., by the Bull of Approbation, dated January 26th 1725, classed the Institute among the religious Congregations officially recognized by the Church : this signal favour assured for the Institute the protection of the Church, and, at the same time, guaranteed its independence. The Brothers were so highly esteemed by the Bishops, that they vied with one another to have them in their dioceses as auxiliaries to their zeal; and Pope Clement XIV. summarized the sentiments of all when he said in 1772: "I value the Brothers very highly."

The royal authority followed their progress not less attentively and also encouraged their efforts. Louis XV., in 1724, approved the Society and issued Letters Patent for the jurisdiction of the parliament of Rouen; Letters Patent for the parliaments of Paris and Toulouse were granted some time after, by Louis XVI. According to the terms of the approbation, the civil authority recognized the right of the Brothers to form masters, and to teach charity schools gratuitously, and receive pupils in boarding schools, and accept delinquents sent to them by order of the court or of the parliament. Thus protected by the two powers, the Brothers were enabled freely to accomplish their religious and social mission.

They had however many enemies. It is a strange thing that the philosophers did not understand the mission and work of the Brothers; they despised those whom they were pleased to call *ignorantins*, and they asked the king to banish them as dangerous subjects. And for what reason? Because they contributed, said Granet De Foulon, "to the too great propagation of free instruction." "If the Brothers are left free", he further added, "there will soon not be an artisan but will know how to read and write. The interest of the State demands their destruction." Thus, according to the philosophers, the Brothers are dangerous, because they instruct the people.

In the eyes of the Calvinists, and especially those of the South, the Brothers were the too solid props of the Catholic religion; here and there, the Huguenots stirred up petty revolutions in the schools, hoping to have the Brothers banished because of the disorder. Additional opposition was excited by the rivalry of the writing-masters, because gratuitous education in the new schools threatened their existence. These bewildered masters did not perceive that, with the Brothers, there had also arisen a new social force whose power was irresistible: it was instruction offered to all without distinction, given gratuitously, and according to infallibly successful methods.

But it is necessary to remark that in the eighteenth century, the Institute was passing through social conditions very different from those in which it lives since the Revolution.

Public opinion considered educational questions as holding only a secondary place: the court, the army, and finance occupied the first place in men's minds.

A religious society directing schools, instructing the people, and principally the poor, passed unperceived; it could arouse only sordid passions of local or personal interest.

Political passions that excite a whole people, did not grow restless on the subject of education. The State had not yet seized upon the schools to turn them into instruments of government. Far from reserving to itself the monopoly of teaching, it left to private enterprise the care of instructing the rich in colleges and the poor in primary schools; it looked kindly on those who devoted themselves to educational works. The Church, on the other hand, was much more active; and her authority had a preponderating place in educational questions. As great as had been her zeal in the founding of universities, colleges, and primary schools, so great was her attention to their preservation and development: by means of the schools, she had planted the faith in the souls of the French; and by them she endeavoured to preserve it.

But then the Revolution came along, determined to overthrow the old order of things, and set up society on entirely new bases. The Institute of the Brothers, during this terrible storm, disappeared for a while, but it did not perish; when peace was re-established, it resumed its onward march, under new conditions, towards still greater progress.

UNDER THE REVOLUTION AND THE EMPIRE

The Assembly of 1789, which had been convoked to destroy the abuses that weighed upon the kingdom, seemed to have no other object than to overturn all the institutions of ancient France. The Brothers, who devoted themselves for the people, were not attacked immediately; in fact, they entertained the hope that their Institute would be respected. For, in the decrees which confiscated the goods of the Church and suppressed monastic vows, the Assembly had declared that, for the present, nothing ought to be changed with regard to houses engaged in public instruction. But, alas! the illusion was of short duration; the decree of March 22nd 1791, which obliged all teachers to take the civil oath, left the Brothers no alternative but to betray their duty or abandon their schools. Their fidelity, in this conjuncture, proved the degree of their virtue: for, with heroic simplicity, they disregarded all summons to take the oath. "I will never take such an oath", said one, "because my conscience forbids it." Moreover, their dissolution had already been resolved upon, and was published on August 18th 1792. The Legislative Assembly, while suppressing the Institute, declared however, and as if in cruel irony, that "it had deserved well of the Country."

The dispersion commenced immediately. During the Reign of Terror, some Brothers fell on the scaffold, others suffered all the horrors of transportation or consummated their sacrifice, as galley-slaves, on the

prison ships at Rochefort; others enrolled themselves in the army; some continued their teaching profession; some expatriated themselves and went to seek refuge in the house in Rome. Only two communities survived these sad days: those of Rome and Orvieto, in Italy.

The revolutionary storm did immense damage in the course of a few years; but, being too violent to last long, it had already exhausted its fury before reaching the roots of the majestic trees it had blown down. From these roots, rich in sap, there sprang new trunks which consoled afflicted souls with the promise of repairing such havoc and ruin. The Institute of the Brothers was the first to bloom again in all its force and freshness. It possessed a reserve of life in Rome, not only because it had several of its members there, but also because there was still a chief, in the person of Brother Frumence, who had been made Vicar General by Pius VI. in 1795, when Brother Agathon, Superior General, had been imprisoned. In France, as soon as the reign of the guillotine had passed away, the Brothers, who still survived, resumed, here and there, their humble office of schoolmasters. In a short time, two schools became even very flourishing, those of Brother Gerbaud in Paris, in the quarter du Gros-Caillou, and of Brother Pigménion in Lyons.

After the first consul had taken the direction of affairs, his chief care was to organize public instruction. But at the outset he met a grave difficulty, the scarcity of schoolmasters. It was then that, at the requests formulated by the departmental assemblies and by the municipalities of the cities, asking for "those teachers who had directed the schools so well before the Revo-

lution, " Napoleon Bonaparte appealed to the Brothers and to the nuns; and at the instance of his uncle, Cardinal Fesch, his ambassador with the Pope, he gave legal existence to the Brothers of the Christian Schools by a decree, dated December 1803 (*11 frimaire an XII*).

This official approbation was the signal of a new return to life of the Institute. The dispersed Brothers came together in the Lyons house and reassumed the religious habit; Providence soon sent new recruits to enlarge the little band of Brothers; Brother Frumence, who kept his title of Vicar General till his death in 1810, left Rome to take up the government of his Congregation in Lyons.

Soon after this, there was issued an imperial decree, dated March 17th 1808, which created the University of France, and placed the Institute in an official position very different from the old state of affairs.

Napoleon, smitten with absolutism, had resolved to place in the hands of the authorities all the forms of influence and all the means of governing. It was not enough for him to maintain public order and to direct the material interests of the country; he determined to penetrate the souls and minds of men, that his ideas and sentiments might be shared by his subjects. From that time, education, which until then had been confined to families and to those religious corporations which had gained their confidence, became a function of the State: that is, the State turned schoolmaster.

The monopoly of teaching was not however so absolute as to leave no room for private enterprise. Teachers not aided by the State could open private schools. But, according to the terms of the decree, dated March 17th 1808,

no scholastic establishment could be opened without having previously obtained the authorization of the imperial University, and without paying a large annual tribute to the State. Napoleon I. greatly disliked private schools, even when authorized, for he wrote to Fontanes May 24th 1808: "The University has the care of all public institutions, and it must see that there shall be as few private ones as possible." Under these circumstances, which were modified only by the law of June 28th 1833, private schools were rare and their development constantly checked.

What was the position of the Brothers under these circumstances? Napoleon, who, on account of the scarcity of schoolmasters, could not well do without them, and who, besides, highly esteemed them, put a number of government schools under their direction. Thus, those who had the direction of public schools were incorporated with the University. Without ceasing to be religious, they became in a certain sense officers of the State, and were paid by it. In some respects, this was an advantage since they could fulfil their mission of popular teachers, but it had its disadvantages as well, which often caused grave embarrassments, from which they were delivered only by their invincible fidelity to their traditions.

They were called upon, in 1809, to present their constitutions for the approbation of the University. This body, influenced by Gallican ideas, of which the Emperor was the most firm supporter, required that they should be guided in their obedience "by the maxims contained in the Declaration of the French clergy in the year 1682." It required all the energy and moral influence of M. Emery, superior of Saint-

Sulpice and member of the council of the University, to cancel so vexatious a provision.

An intense struggle commenced soon after, relative to methods of teaching. For the ministers of public instruction tried, in 1815, to introduce the Lancasterian, or mutual system into France. Under the pressure of the government, the schools adopted this method in a large number of communes : this system of teaching children with the aid of children did, perhaps, under the watchful eye of the master, render some service, and especially as there was a great scarcity of masters. But the Brothers resisted all ministerial solicitations on this subject; and by their unyielding fidelity to the traditions left them by their founder, they saved the simultaneous system, which thenceforward prevailed almost everywhere.

All the Brothers, however, were not engaged in official schools nor incorporated with the University. Certain authorized private schools were confided to them; and here they naturally enjoyed greater independence. It was even very remarkable that when the Mother-house was removed from Lyons to Paris, in 1821, they had not a single official school in the capital. But the services that they rendered to the city by means of their private schools were so much appreciated that, to remunerate them, it graciously offered them a house.

They had the confidence of the families, and, to a certain extent, the favour of the government; hence their Institute was not obstructed in its development, and multiplied the number of its schools.

UNDER THE LAW OF LIBERTY OF EDUCATION

The Guizot law of June 28th 1833 made a breach in the monopoly that had been established by the Empire, and thereby emancipated primary education. The State remained the master of the school; but it permitted others to come and teach alongside it. Until then the number of private schools had been very limited on account of the obligation of being previously authorized; but, when the new law required only a simple declaration on the part of a certified teacher, they greatly multiplied.

The line of distinction between a communal and a free school was from this time finely drawn. Communal schools could be put under the direction of religious teachers; the Brothers, in fact, took a large number of such schools. But they accepted also many free schools, for the direction of which they were paid by private charity. Whether paid by the State or by private individuals, they accomplished all alike their mission of Christian educators.

But the law of 1833, at the same time, gave a great impetus to primary education; each commune in France was obliged to have its school and its teacher; each department was to have its normal school for the training of masters. This movement did not at first create any rivalry unfriendly to the Brothers; the number of lay masters at that time was insufficient; certain normal schools, such as the one in Rouen, were even placed in charge of the Brothers.

In spite of all this, the secular authority favoured the lay teachers. While the Brothers depended entirely on their religious superiors, and this is easily understood, the lay masters were more at the service, not of the country, but of the minister and his policy. Hence the tendency, on the part of the State, to increase the number of lay teachers. And indeed the time came, when the public authorities of the third Republic, acting under the pressure of political and antireligious passions, entered into the work of the laicisation of the schools.

This laicisation was gradually enforced, first by administrative power, and afterwards by law.

The laicisation of the State schools was begun in 1877, when Gambetta and Ferry, who domineered the new Parliament, declared war on religion under the form of clericalism. The municipalities, especially those of the towns, replaced the religious teachers by secular masters; Paris gave the signal to begin. Vainly had Brother Irlide, who was then the Superior General of the Brothers, tried to induce the Council of State to recognize the rights acquired by the Institute; the laicisation continued its course.

Its speed was accelerated by the Ferry law of March 28th 1882. This law created compulsory attendance at school, a very wise thing in itself; the official schools were to be gratuitous to all children, which was quite in accordance with the Brothers' Rules; but all religious teaching was prohibited in the communal schools, a provision calculated to oblige the religious masters to abandon the official schools of their own accord. The religious masters, while preserving their official situation, knew how to reconcile the legal

prescriptions of those secularized or neutral courses of study with their duties as Christian educators. Thanks to the assistance of the clergy and generous Catholics, they were enabled to find premises where, at certain hours, they said the prayers and taught the catechism which were prohibited in the schools.

To have done with it, the *Chambres* voted the laicisation of all official teachers by the Goblet law of October 30th 1886. Thereafter, no religious was to be appointed in communal schools; and further, in 1891, all boys' schools were to be entirely secularized. Some delay was made in the case of girls' schools, because there was a lack of lay female teachers.

Thus were the Brothers, who had been re-established and encouraged by Napoléon I., entirely evicted by the Ferry law from all official teaching. Since 1886, they have been employed in free schools. As during the lifetime of their founder, they work, aided by private subscriptions, for the Christian education of poor children and the sons of artisans.

For, side by side with the official, neutral schools, which are too often atheistical, Christian faith, in a noble transport of generosity, has erected free Christian schools, in all the large towns and in nearly all the important boroughs. To save France from the antireligious peril, there has been no shirking of any pecuniary sacrifice, and religious masters have generously responded to nearly all the appeals made to their zeal and devotedness by the several committees of Catholic charity. And this is why the school laws that were destined to destroy the teaching Congregations, have failed to arrest their progress. The religious, cast adrift by the State, have found in liberty a principle of

interior development and a power of expansion abroad.

At the close of the year 1900, fourteen years after the passing of the Goblet law, the Institute of John Baptist De La Salle comprised : 1530 houses, spread in all parts of the world; 15060 Brothers actively employed; 4400 novices and aspirants; 75 boarding schools for the sons of artisans, farmers, merchants and manufacturers; 316376 pupils of every race and of every climate.

This human swarm is distinguished at once both for its activity and its good order.

Initiative, that superior power of intelligent activity, has never failed the Brothers; wherever they have carried their efforts and to whatever they have applied them, they have been the pioneers of official institutions.

By the schools for adults, they early put a course of instruction within the reach of young workmen who can devote only the winter evenings to study.

The celebrated boarding school of Passy, in Paris, founded in 1844, and for a long time aided by the State, was the model on which, in 1865, the Duruy law organized special secondary education. The boarding schools, which have greatly multiplied, have not all the same end or course of study. Amongst them, we find commercial schools, like that of the Francs-Bourgeois, Paris; agricultural schools, as at Beauvais; preparatory schools, such as at Saint-Etienne; industrial schools, with workshops of different arts and trades, such as Saint-Nicolas in Paris, and at Rheims.

Whilst devoting themselves to education, the Brothers are not less interested in popular and social works. Their solicitude follows their pupils when not in class

on Sundays and holidays; it accompanies them to the workshops, it enrolls them in *patronages*, or in the Society of Saint Vincent De Paul, then there are the courses for apprentices and adults, societies of former pupils, guilds and boarding-homes, Christian doctrine societies, etc. And, in addition to all this, they are patriotic and devoted to their country. They were seen and admired, during the terrible year, offering their services on all the different battlefields, but especially in Paris, gathering and nursing the wounded, and rendering to the dead the last services.

These works are accomplished by them in all simplicity and without any search after personal glory. Many of the Brothers are men of parts and distinction, of which they give proofs in their several departments; but the majority work silently and unknown, having no ambition but to please God. If such men as Brothers Philippe, Irlide and Joseph, are so well known, it is because their position of Superior General made them more conspicuous; all the others hide themselves under the common appellation of Brothers of the Christian Schools.

The power of the Brothers lies in their adherence to their Rules and traditions: they have kept to the traditions of their father, as we have already shown, whenever there was question of gratuitous schools and the teaching of Latin; they obey their superiors and fulfil their teaching mission in the places assigned them. On the other hand, nothing is neglected to give them a good formation: whilst still young, they are admitted to the junior novitiate where they acquire the spirit of the Institute; in the novitiate, properly so called, they are specially prepared for the religious life; and in the

scholasticate, they are taught the sciences and methods that are necessary for the efficient fulfilling of their professional duties; and, even when in school, their Rules follow them to assure their perseverance.

The persecution from which the religious Congregations of France have suffered so much since 1901 has been a severe blow to the Brothers of this country. Their schools, their boarding schools and their novitiates have been closed. But, as far as circumstances have permitted, these works have been reorganized under other forms and in other countries. And the very resistance that the Institute has opposed to the violent shocks that have assailed it proves its vitality¹.

Such is, after the vicissitudes of two centuries, the work that was founded by John Baptist De La Salle, intact and living, faithful and progressive, a glory and a power for the Church.

THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF THE INSTITUTE

It cannot be doubted that the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools has been and still continues to be more than ever a power, because we find in it numbers and vitality. But what has this force produced? What has the Church gained by it? Has it benefited society?

Let us remark, from the outset, that, in the eyes of faith, every fervent Congregation, even the most secluded and contemplative, is useful to Christian society and even to humanity in general. Members of the same body,

¹ This paragraph has been added to the original text by the translator.

united in common fellowship of interests, we share in the religious growth of the Church, which is procured by the ardent prayers and generous mortifications of the saints. This common contribution of spiritual goods raises the moral level of humanity; and, in the midst of the wickedness that is the shame of our age, the virtues of the good render the society among which we live more healthy. The Brothers of the Institute, with the merits of their painful life and the richness of their prolonged prayers, have contributed much to these mysterious influences.

But if they have served the Church as religious, their social action as popular educators has been more striking and more susceptible of observation.

To form a sound judgment of the social influence of the Brothers, one must be careful not to look on it from a wrong standpoint. It is not from a distance, but at the point of application, that we must consider the influence of the Brothers and judge its far-reaching effects.

From the moment of their contact with their pupils, have the Brothers been and are they a moral and social force? For, if they are a force, its action cannot be lost; the result may appear nearly imperceptible a few years after quitting the school, because it becomes confounded with other component forces, but it will always remain incontestable.

Now, what is necessary that a master may be able to influence his pupils? He must love them; for, by loving them, he will give them his time, his knowledge, his whole life. The children, on their side, if they feel that he has affection and devotedness, yield themselves to him, submit to his influence, become impregnated with

his ideas and sentiments, and bear away the imprint of the soul of their teacher. Have we yet to ask whether the Brothers have loved their pupils; whether they have devoted themselves for them, whether they have, in turn, been loved and listened to, whether their religious and moral lessons have left an impression? Would it be rash to say that, of the many religious houses of education we have in France, the Brothers' houses, and especially their boarding schools, rank among those in which the warmest mutual sympathy unites the masters and pupils?

But has this influence, which produces this mutual sympathy, had a depressing or an elevating power? This would be to inquire whether we depress or elevate souls by teaching them their destiny, by placing before their eyes a sublime ideal, and by exercising them every day to overcome their caprices and their passions. Has not one equal care of the personal value of a man and of his social capabilities when one provides him with the means to attain his final end by honestly making his way through the affairs of this life? Without doubt, there are some pupils who, for one reason or another, escape the influence of the Brothers; but it acts, more or less profoundly and lastingly, on the majority of them. And should it happen, in after life, that the impression becomes less distinct, it is never entirely obliterated; what remains of it is quite sufficient to distinguish the pupil of the religious school from him of the neutral school. How very thoughtless and imprudent then are those who make light of the importance of the preservation of religious education!

Besides, this influence extends beyond the school, or the college, or the patronage: perhaps it reaches the

parents themselves more efficaciously than it did the children. It lives and strengthens in the families; how many former students, after the errors of youth, follow the religious and moral tendencies that were once aroused in their souls with greater docility, when they have become fathers of families! How many others, intimidated by hostile surroundings, silently preserve in the recesses of their hearts the spark of life which, they have no doubt, will rekindle into full blaze at the last hour!

This beneficent influence, the effects of which act at a time more or less distant, is common, it is true, to all the religious teaching Congregations. But does not the good that they all effect owe its origin, in some way or other, to the Institute of John Baptist De La Salle? For, they were fashioned after him as a model, and they live up to his apostolic spirit. Jean De Lamennais and Gabriel Deshayes, when founding the Brothers of Ploërmel (Morbihan) and of Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre (Vendée), in 1819, sought but to follow "as nearly as possible the Rules of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and employ their method of teaching." And when in 1842, M. Delamare, vicar general of Coutances, founded in the Manche the Institute of the Brothers of Montebourg, he said to his first disciples: "I know nothing so wise, with regard to Rules for teaching Brothers, as the Rules of M. De La Salle."

Here is then an additional honour and merit for our Saint to have inspired other foundations and to have traced out their way. There is not one of them, however, that has exactly copied his work. For, doubtless to supply new wants and comply with new exigencies, some have admitted the mixture of Priests and Brothers, others have accepted to attend to the wants of worship

in the sacristies, and others again have granted Brothers for small, isolated schools in hamlets, and these isolated Brothers to live with the parish-priest. There are at least a dozen Congregations of Brothers, and several hundred Institutes of women in France. To John Baptist De La Salle belongs the glory of having given a model to all these institutions, by means of which free schools are able to hold their own, side by side with the government schools. Many foreign countries, and in particular, Ireland, have copied the same model, and have reaped the same heavenly blessings.

The influence of John Baptist has extended still farther; for he it was who conceived those happy ideas that have made him the pioneer and legislator of modern pedagogy. His methods, after long opposition, have penetrated all official schools, and the simultaneous system has prevailed at last; the actual arrangement of the classes, whether acknowledged or not, comes from him; the courses of modern studies, save few modifications, have been copied from those he inaugurated at Saint-Yon; from the beginning, he gave adult schools, continuation classes, and normal schools, their essential constitutions. His Brothers, by preserving intact the traditions received from their father, have, during two centuries, offered the models upon which public authorities have modelled primary teaching.

THE GLORY OF JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

In proportion as his works spread and enlisted imitators, the glory of John Baptist De La Salle increased. For, if God did not wait for the judgment of men to put

the heavenly crown on his brow, it pleased Him only gradually to reveal to the world the merit of His servant.

When John Baptist died, his name had, as yet, no place in history. He had had no part in the events that attracted public attention; he had not, like his seminary companions, Fénelon and Godet Des Marais, filled any high offices at the court; he had, on the contrary, sacrificed all his advantages of birth, fortune and position, to bury himself, though still quite young, in the obscure company of a few poor schoolmasters. His work, however excellent and useful, had not yet compelled admiration, and it was known but in about twenty towns and large boroughs. Miracles, the conspicuous proofs of sanctity, had not yet signalized him to the multitude as a St. Vincent Ferrer; the many favours, all closely bordering on the miraculous, which his prayers had often obtained, had hardly gone beyond the small circle of his disciples. At Rouen, and wherever else he was known, his death elicited this general and spontaneous cry, "He was a saint, the Saint is dead." But this cry did not echo through the whole of France, as at the death of a St. Vincent De Paul, because he had lived as a stranger aloof from the prominent affairs of the kingdom.

Let his work grow and spread, and his name will do the same, for they are inseparable; let it scatter broadcast the benefits of his devotedness throughout the nations, and the founder will be blessed and praised by the whole human race. Since his death as during his life, his destiny has been indissolubly bound up with that of his Institute, and his memory has not had a more brilliant halo of glory than that given to it by the development of his Institute. And as if humility still

actuated him in heaven, he would seem not to accept the eminent diadem which the Church places on the brow of the Saints, but at the hour when his Institute had merited it by its immense works and had need of its consolation in the midst of the bitter afflictions of contradiction and persecution.

However, his sons showed themselves early as the jealous guardians of the memory of their father, and commenced to collect with religious care whatever might perpetuate it and prolong his life among them. They had already caused his portrait to be taken : they were still more jealous in preserving from oblivion all the characteristics of his religious and moral portrait. Brother Barthélemy, his immediate successor, asked all who had known him to give in writing any particulars they might have concerning him ; some Memoirs were written by those Brothers who had been in close relations with him during his life. All these documents were placed in the hands of Canon Blain, the Saint's intimate friend, and they were the precious mine whence came forth the first printed *Life* of John Baptist : a work abounding in spirituality and history, and which, in spite of a few defects, still remains the richest and most authentic source of information concerning the founder of the Brothers.

The Brothers were not less zealous in spreading their father's name among the children of their schools. Faithful imitators of his modesty and humility, they effaced themselves in his presence, and professed to be in their classes but the faithful instruments of the founder. Wherever a Brother taught, it was therefore John Baptist De La Salle who directed the school. The Brother had no personal name ; each presented himself

under the common name of Brother of John Baptist De La Salle. Thus borne, this name quickly made its way, and towards the close of the eighteenth century it was spread through the whole of France. It was at this time that the Institute, throwing off all its timid reserve, began to desire that the hero of so many solid virtues, the pioneer of so many zealous and useful works, might be placed by the Church on her altars. Brother Agathon, Superior General, gave orders for the preparation of the process of canonization; but this praiseworthy undertaking of filial piety had to be postponed on account of the outbreak of the Revolution.

Like rich, strong soils that are rendered more fertile by storms, the Institute found itself more important and strengthened by the Revolution. Instead of being a simple private institution working in the shade, it was summoned by the most powerful of monarchs to take its place among the official bodies of the State; for it was incorporated with the University, and its services were regarded as very important by the authorities. Such a position placed John Baptist and his work in a very conspicuous situation. People asked themselves, both in the Church and in the State, why this benefactor of the popular classes had not been inscribed by the side of St. Vincent De Paul on the list of the Saints: though the works of the great educator made less show during his life, yet they were not less far-reaching and useful than those of the great apostle of charity. At the earnest entreaties of the Brothers and under the pressure of public opinion, the process of his canonization was simultaneously begun, in 1835, in Rheims, Paris and Rouen.

Providence seemed to facilitate the task of the judges;

for it showered, as it were, extraordinary blessings on the whole Institute during the long generalship of Brother Philippe, from 1838 to 1874. A genial movement of grace brought a large number of vocations; elementary schools multiplied, the boarding schools began to take their bearings, the works of continuation classes commenced : all producing a magnificent efflorescence for the coronation of the founder. On May 8th 1840, Rome conferred on the Servant of God the title of Venerable, and, on January 10th 1852, she declared that his authentic writings are perfectly orthodox; on July 10th 1873, the Congregation of Rites recognized that he had practised the Christian virtues to an heroic degree, and a decree to this effect was issued on November 1st following; finally, on November 1st 1887, three facts, very critically examined by physicians and canonists, were declared miraculous.

The Beatification, the happy consequence of the process, was celebrated by Leo XIII., in the Vatican, February 19th 1888. It caused a universal outburst of admiration and praise for John Baptist De La Salle. In all the houses of the Institute, and wherever the Brothers had schools, splendid feasts were organized, at which, in the presence of vast concourses of recollected people, all the arts vied in lending their assistance to piety. Painting excelled in the application of its colours; music gave forth its sweetest melodies; poetry was awakened to its most beautiful and inspiring sentiments; eloquence in its turn celebrated, in almost numberless eulogistic panegyrics, the virtues and the social works of the Saint; the very bronze and marble assumed a strikingly animated appearance under the chisels of Oliva, Falguière and Montagny.

Heaven itself joined in all the honours paid to John Baptist De La Salle here below, and soon indicated, by new miracles, that the time was come to add the splendour of Canonization to the glory of the Servant of God. And, therefore, on May 24th 1900, the illustrious Pontiff, Leo XIII., the great doctor of the nineteenth century, by an infallible judgment, declared that John Baptist De La Salle had merited, together with heavenly bliss, the religious honours which the Church renders to the most virtuous of her children. And once more, all hearts abounded with joy, and everywhere magnificent festivities announced to the people that heaven and earth united in paying homage to the remarkable benefactor of humanity.

And we, obedient to the voice of the Pontiff, throw ourselves at the feet of our dear Saint : we congratulate him on his having received, even here below, the hundredfold promised to his sacrifices, and we humbly entreat that, after having worked to make known his name, his virtues, his works and his glory, we may merit to participate in his heavenly bliss.

FINIS

LIST

OF THE ESTABLISHMENTS FOUNDED BY ST. JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE

1679. RHEIMS (Saint-Maurice). . . School.
1679. RHEIMS (Saint-Jacques). . . School.
1680. RHEIMS (Saint-Symphorien) School.
1682. RETHEL School.
1682. GUISE School.
1682. CHATEAU-PORCIEN. School (soon closed).
1682. LAON (Saint-Pierre) School.
1682. RHEIMS (rue Neuve). Community.
1684. RHEIMS (rue Neuve). Novitiate.
1684. RHEIMS (rue Neuve). Junior Novitiate.
1684. RHEIMS (rue Neuve). Seminary for country school-
masters.
1685. RENWEZ (Ardennes) Masters' Seminary (soon closed).
1688. PARIS (Saint-Sulpice). School, rue Princesse.
1690. PARIS (Saint-Sulpice). School, rue du Bac.
1691. VAUGIRARD House of retreat.
1692. VAUGIRARD Novitiate.
1697. PARIS (Saint-Sulpice). School, rue Saint-Placide.
1698. PARIS (Saint-Sulpice). Community, in the Grand'Maison.
1698. PARIS (Saint-Sulpice). School, at the Grand'Maison.
1698. PARIS (Saint-Sulpice). Boarding school for the Irish
(it lasted about two years).
1698. PARIS (Saint-Sulpice). Sunday school (till 1704).
1699. PARIS (Saint-Sulpice) School, rue des Fossés-Monsieur-
le-Prince (until about 1704).

1699. PARIS (Saint-Hippolyte) School, rue de l'Ourcine.
1699. PARIS (Saint-Hippolyte) Seminary for country school-
masters (until 1705).
1699. CHARTRES. Two schools.
1700. CALAIS. School.
1700. ROME Departure of Brother Drolin.
1701. TROYES (Saint-Nizier) School.
1703. AVIGNON (Saint-Sympho-
rien) School.
1703. PARIS (Saint-Paul) School, rue de Charonne.
1705. CALAIS. School for young sailors.
1705. ROME School.
1705. PARIS (Saint-Roch) School, rue Saint-Honoré (aban-
doned in 1708).
1705. DARNÉTAL, near Rouen School.
1705. ROUEN. Schools.
1705. ROUEN (Saint-Yon) Novitiate.
1705. ROUEN (Saint-Yon) Boarding school.
- ? ROUEN (Saint-Yon) House of correction.
1705. DIJON (Saint-Pierre) School.
1706. MARSEILLES (Saint-Laurent). School.
1707. VALRÉAS. School (soon closed).
1707. MENDE School.
1707. ALAIS School.
1707. GRENOBLE (Saint-Laurent). School.
1708. SAINT-DENIS School.
1708. SAINT-DENIS Masters' Seminary.
1709. MACON. School.
1710. VERSAILLES (Saint-Louis). School.
1710. BOULOGNE-SUR-MER. School.
1710. MOULINS (Saint-Pierre). School.
1711. LES VANS (Ardèche). School.
1712. MARSEILLES. Novitiate (lasted about a year).
1715. ROUEN (Saint-Yon) Reformatory school.
1718. PARIS (Saint-Sulpice). School, near the Invalides.
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SUPERIORS GENERAL OF THE INSTITUTE

FROM THE FOUNDATION

BROTHER BARTHÉLEMY	from May 23 1717 to June 8 1720.	3
BROTHER TIMOTHÉE.	from August 7 1720 to August 3 1751.	31
BROTHER CLAUDE	from August 3 1751 to May 10 1767.	10
BROTHER FLORENCE.	from May 19 1767 to August 10 1777.	10
BROTHER AGATHON	from August 10 1777 to September 16 1798.	21
BROTHER FRUMENCE.	appointed Vicar General by Pius VI. from August 7 1795 to January 27 1810.	15
BROTHER GERBAUD	from September 8 1810 to August 10 1822.	12
BROTHER GUILLAUME DE JÉSUS,	from November 11 1822 to June 10 1830.	8
BROTHER ANACLET.	from September 2 1830 to September 6 1838.	8
BROTHER PHILIPPE	from November 21 1838 to January 7 1874.	36
BROTHER JEAN-OLYMPE.	from April 9 1874 to April 17 1875.	1
BROTHER IRLIDE.	from July 2 1875 to July 26 1884.	9
BROTHER JOSEPH	from October 18 1884 to January 1 1897.	13
BROTHER GABRIEL-MARIE.	elected March 19 1897.	

DECRETAL LETTERS
OF OUR MOST HOLY FATHER IN JESUS CHRIST
LEO XIII. POPE
CONFERRING
THE HONOURS OF THE SAINTS ON
BLESSED JOHN BAPTIST DE LA SALLE
FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

LEO BISHOP
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD

In perpetual remembrance.

Before ascending to the highest heaven to be seated at the right hand of His Father, Jesus Christ reanimated the hope of His disciples by addressing them in words of incomparable sweetness; but He also foretold them the persecutions that were to assail them in the world. Indeed, Eternal Wisdom had decreed that as Jesus Christ had publicly triumphed by the cross over the enemies of our salvation, so we should not otherwise enter into the kingdom of heaven than by a way sown with many tribulations. Now, in order not to lose courage in this struggle against the spirits of malice, we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, and also upon the heroes that have gone before us in the combat, and who, being now crowned, bear the palm of victory. And, it is for the purpose of recalling this duty, that We have received this particular power, inherent in Our Apostolic charge, in virtue of which, when Servants of God have distinguished themselves by heroic virtues attested by

divine signs and prodigies, We propose them to the veneration of Christian peoples, in order that, during the exile in which we still live far from the Lord, we may find in them both example and protection.

Happy to have received this power, We exercise it with particular complacency on this day, when We confer the honours of the Saints upon John Baptist De La Salle, Priest and Founder of the Christian Schools. For, We see around Us, an innumerable assembly of the faithful come to this city from all parts of the world, before the relics of the Apostles, on the occasion of the Holy Year published by Us; behold, moreover, the dawn of a new century to which no service more profitable can be rendered than to propose to it the lessons and example of John Baptist, since it will not see peace, the object of our desires, finally established on the reign of justice, unless children and youth be brought up in the fear of the Lord, and in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel.

The child predestined one day to become a shining ornament of his race and of Holy Church, John Baptist, was born of a noble family on April 30th 1651, at Rheims, one of the most illustrious cities of France. From his childhood, he manifested in his conduct a sweet piety, which was to shine in his person during the whole course of his life. Though endowed by nature with a mirthful disposition, he conceived a distaste from his tender infancy for games and amusements, delighting only in the history of the Saints. As soon as he was permitted to leave the house, his great pleasure was to visit churches, in which he used to pour forth prayers to the august Sacrament of the Eucharist and to the Holy Mother of God with such perseverance, recollection, and fervour, as to excite the admiration of those present.

He went to school at an early age, and acquitted himself of his new duties with so much modesty and application to study, that his teachers soon recognized in him a child with a great future, and acquainted his father with their hopes. The latter, who belonged to the magistracy of the city, had a love of predilection for John, the eldest of his seven children; he destined him to be the continuator and stay of his family. But it pleased God to decide otherwise. The youth, under the

influence of divine grace, chose the Lord for his portion, and resolved to solicit admission into the ecclesiastical state. His father, animated with deep religious sentiments, placed no obstacle to this design. John showed himself so worthy of the habit he had put on, that he was made a canon of Rheims without any opposition; and he reflected honour on his position by the assiduous practice of the virtues of his state. Four years later, he entered the seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris, in order to pursue his course of theology.

Here, his ardour for study and the sanctity of his life so well conciliated for him all hearts, that unanimous regrets accompanied him, when, at the death of his father, he was obliged to return home, in order to manage the affairs of his family, and the education of his younger brothers. In the accomplishment of these duties, notwithstanding his youth, he manifested admirable prudence; he regulated all things in such a manner, that his house presented the appearance of a religious family. He consecrated to prayer and study all the leisure that his domestic administration left him, being solely occupied with the thought of preparing himself worthily for the priesthood, the object of his most ardent desires.

In order to succeed the better, he confided the direction of his conscience to Nicolas Roland, the theologian of the Chapter of Rheims, a man of eminent virtue, who inspired him with the idea of giving himself entirely to the care of schools destined for the children of the people. It was also in obedience to the counsels of Roland, that John, already detached from all affection to perishable things, formed the design of changing his canonicate for the parish of St. Peter's; but, in spite of his pressing entreaties to the Archbishop to allow this change, the prelate declined giving his consent, in order that his college of canons might not be deprived of a young member of such great worth.

After having finished his course of theology with the most brilliant success, John was ordained priest in the course of his twenty-seventh year in the metropolitan church of Rheims on Saturday of Holy Week. On the following day, he offered the Holy Sacrifice for the first time, without exterior pomp, as he had himself decided; but all the assistants were struck with admiration at the sight of the radiance of faith and charity that

beamed from his countenance. In the celebration of the holy Mysteries, he always preserved this piety, which shone in all his bearing, and which often made so profound an impression on those present, that in leaving the church, they formed the resolution of thenceforward leading a more holy life.

Being profoundly penetrated with this truth, that every priest should labour for the edifying of the Body of Christ, John at once devoted himself to the service of his neighbour : he frequently visited the sick, consoled the afflicted, helped the unfortunate, preached sermons, gave missions and heard confessions. By the pious activity of his apostolate, he succeeded in inducing many to lead better lives ; and far from forgetting the care of his own soul in the midst of these labours, he daily progressed in the practice of virtue, especially in humility, in meekness, in contempt of perishable things, in the renouncement of himself and his own will, which he immolated, in order to render it conformable to the divine will.

He had hardly been ordained priest, when the director of his conscience, carried off by death, bequeathed to him the office of directing the *Sisters of the Infant Jesus*, whom he had instituted for the gratuitous teaching of poor little girls. Thanks to his prudence and firmness in discharging this duty, John succeeded in saving this Institute, which serious difficulties had threatened will almost certain ruin ; he even obtained from the King *Letters Patent*, providing for the security of the Religious and the wants of the schools in the future.

Father Roland had formed the project of employing, in the education of boys, the same means he had used in that of girls ; but death prevented the execution of his design. However, some time afterwards, there came to Rheims a schoolmaster named Adrien Nyel, sent by a lady-relative of John, to consult with him about the establishment of schools for boys. John immediately saw the great difficulties that such an enterprise would meet with ; nevertheless, he praised the design and promised his support to Nyel. He began by praying earnestly to God for light ; then, filled with diffidence in himself, he asked the advice of the most prudent members of the clergy. When he had obtained their appro-

bation, a first school, which had been long expected, was finally established in the parish of St. Maurice; then a second, some months later, at St. James'. But, whilst the pupils crowded in, teachers were lacking; besides, Nyel, who was at their head, allowed himself to be carried away by the vivacity of his excessively ardent disposition, and was too often absent. John was not without perceiving the danger: to maintain the teachers in duty, he often visited and advised them; subsequently, in order to render his assistance more efficacious, he assembled them in a house near his own. Finally, recognizing in Nyel sufficient qualification to teach but not to form teachers, John determined to bring them together into his own house, and to make the sacrifice of living in common with them: this he did on the feast of the holy Precursor in 1681, after consultation with some men of great prudence. But, as his family did not, without reluctance, submit to this kind of life which they judged unworthy of their nobility, John, in the following year and on the same day, established himself in another house with his group of teachers, and there fixed the seat of his Institute.

By this event, God himself seems to have laid the foundation of the illustrious Congregation of which the Catholic world is justly proud, and which, from its origin, Satan and the enemies of religion, bent on its ruin, have assailed with all their power, because they recognize in it a formidable adversary. The great importance of this Institute appeared immediately to the eyes of the wise. Through the efforts of John, and by the help of God, in the space of two years, schools were established at Rethel, Guise, Laon and Château-Porcien, and as they had for their direction, excellent masters, perfectly skilled in the art of teaching, there flocked to them in serried ranks, a multitude of children, for the greater good not only of themselves, but also of civil society and religion.

Engaged in so many different occupations, John, always a slave to duty, resolved a second time on resigning his canonicate. He thought, moreover, that being thus the first to enter upon the way of sacrifice, he would induce his disciples to follow his example, and at the same time, inspire them with the love of poverty and the resolution of placing their entire confidence in God. Accordingly, he conferred with the Arch-

bishop of Rheims on the resignation of his office ; the latter at first refused ; then, admiring the wisdom and holiness of John, he gave his consent, provided he would resign his benefice in favour of Louis, his younger brother. But John feared to yield to the voice of flesh and blood : deaf to the murmurs of his relatives and of the world, he resigned his charge in favour of a pious and poor priest, whom he chose in preference to his own brother.

Still, this did not appear sufficient to the servant of God. In order to induce himself, with all the members of his Institute, absolutely to hope for nothing but from God alone, he resolved to distribute his patrimony to the poor. He found an opportune occasion during the famine of 1684, which produced a great rise in the price of provisions. Recognizing Jesus Christ himself in the person of the poor, John often received them on his knees. And when he had thus distributed all his goods, he began to beg from door to door for his food, regardless of the contempt of the world. In the eyes of the worldly-wise, the man of God seemed to have lost his reason ; but God rewarded the confidence of His servant : during the two years that the famine lasted, John and his disciples, notwithstanding their great poverty, never failed to have what was necessary, and they contracted no debt. The holy Legislator took good care to place in a strong light this example of the intervention of divine Providence, in order to confirm the Brothers in the love of poverty, which causes humility, the mother and support of the other virtues, to spring up in the soul.

From this time, notwithstanding his delicate constitution, he adopted a more severe manner of life : clothed in coarse garments, contenting himself with common food and that in small quantity, he took but little sleep, and macerated his flesh by the use of the hair-shirt and of an iron chain set with points, and by scourging that was carried to the extent of drawing blood. He bore his infirmities, which were frequent, and often serious, with meekness and inflexible patience. His reply to injuries and outrages was a glance full of tenderness, happy in being able thus, in a measure, to imitate Jesus Christ covered with opprobrium for him. Always walking in the presence of God, he spent in meditation all the time that

his occupations left him, and sometimes even entire nights.

The reputation of his eminent virtues attracted to the man of God many disciples desirous, as far as their strength would permit, of walking in the footsteps of such a master; he employed himself entirely in forming them both to the practices of the religious life and the art of teaching well. As some were still too young, he established for these a Seminary, or kind of Novitiate, where they might be more fittingly trained for the manner of life to which they aspired. In order to procure for country children the same advantages as enjoyed by those of the cities, the servant of God opened, at the same time, another Seminary, destined for the formation of teachers for rural districts. This institution was the origin and type of the schools that were later on called normal schools, and which have rendered services of the highest importance to Religion as well as to the State.

About this time, John, for the first time, called together the members of the Institute in General Assembly. After having begun by piously entering into retreat, they discussed and decided many questions relative to rules, dress and vows. On the feast of the adorable Trinity, the holy Legislator and twelve of his Brothers, bound themselves by a temporary vow of obedience, which they made perpetual, ten years later, after a second General Assembly.

In 1686, the Society of the Christian Schools appearing thenceforth constituted and furnished with laws, John Baptist, filled with contempt of himself, resolved to substitute another Superior General in his stead. The Brothers whom he called together for this purpose, first opposed the measure; but finally, taking pity on the Saint, they elected Brother L'Heureux to replace him; and immediately, the holy Legislator was the first to give example of obedience. However, as the Vicars General of Rheims absolutely refused to approve this measure, John was constrained to resume the charge he had relinquished. He then reflected, that this refusal of the Vicars General had perhaps been caused by the absence of the sacerdotal character in Brother L'Heureux, and he conceived the thought of preparing him for Orders; but the latter died a short time afterwards. The servant of God saw, in this death, a reason to believe that it was not pleasing to God that mem-

bers of the Institute should be raised to the priesthood ; consequently, he took the following double determination of which he made a law : first, that no Brother of the Christian Schools should thenceforward aspire to the priesthood ; secondly, that Latin should never be taught in their schools.

In 1688, as it was found desirable to form new educational establishments in Paris, an appeal was made to John, who went there with two Brothers. Once there, not content with reorganizing the old schools, he also opened new ones ; then he established a Novitiate for his Brothers at Vaugirard ; he instituted Sunday schools, precursors of those which exist at the present time for the teaching of certain arts, and to promote the perseverance of young men in the practice of a Christian life ; he founded, as at Rheims, a Seminary for the formation of lay teachers destined for country schools ; finally, wishing to comply with a desire of King James II., then an exile from England, he assumed the direction of a College, in which forty young Irish nobles were to follow a complete course of instruction, and to be educated in conformity with the principles of Catholic piety.

But the enemy of the human race did not quietly bear the creation of so many salutary works ; it is even hard to relate all the difficulties he raised, and the hatred he excited against the man of God : suits brought against him by the corporation of writing-masters, who were grieved at seeing their classes deserted ; devastation and violent dispersion of the schools of the Brothers ; inconstancy of friends, who withdrew their benevolence. To crown all the other evils, John himself, in consequence of false accusations, was obliged by the ecclesiastical authority to give up his office, and to pass over the direction of his religious to a stranger.

This most meek man bore all with patience, without relaxing in any respect in zeal for the glory of God. At this time, the Jansenist heresy spread through the cities of France and infested souls far and wide. John, who always considered it a sacred duty to venerate the authority of the Roman Pontiff and obey his orders, rose up to combat the errors of Jansenius with all his might. Being persuaded that he could not better promote the security of the members of the Institute than by attaching them firmly to the Roman Chair, he sent to Rome

in 1700, during the most furious storm that had ever broken over his work, two Brothers, one of whom was Gabriel Drolin, who lived twenty-eight years in that city, where he laboured without relaxation for the accomplishment of the mandate that had been given him by the Legislator, his Father. This mandate may be summed up in the following points : to plant the tree of the Congregation in the soil where it might strike the deepest roots, that is, in the centre of unity, under the eyes and auspices of the Apostolic See ; to unite himself more closely, and so to speak, bodily, with the Church of Rome, which can neither fail nor err, notwithstanding all the opposing efforts of the gates of hell ; to obtain from the Vicar of Jesus Christ the approbation of the Rules, and the favour of pronouncing the three vows of religion ; to ask for himself and his Brothers the blessing of the Sovereign Pontiff and the faculty of teaching catechism with the consent of the Bishops ; finally, to be, as it were, the witness of his obedience and the surety of his faith in the presence and under the eyes of the Sovereign Pontiff : a mandate truly admirable and worthy of the Saint, who was willing to bear with the most perfect patience all the injuries offered to his person, but who, with all his energy, repelled the calumny by which the attempt was made to represent him as being ever capable of offering opposition to the Roman Chair.

Clement XI. most benevolently received the two Brothers sent by John Baptist, and confided to them the direction of a school : after him, Our other predecessors followed the same line of conduct.

Meanwhile, as the lay teachers of Paris continued to excite trouble against the Brothers of the Christian Schools, John Baptist was called to Rouen in 1703. He there opened several gratuitous schools for children, but not without grave difficulties. Shortly afterwards, he transferred the novitiate to the little town of Saint-Yon, near the same city, had the buildings enlarged and there established the first commercial and industrial schools. He also admitted youths confided to him for correction, and, by a wise yet firm direction, he brought about improvement in their conduct.

In the midst of these labours, the Institute of John Baptist De La Salle grew under the divine blessing. The Brothers saw

their hard work crowned with success at Chartres, Calais, Troyes, Avignon, Dijon, Marseilles, Mende, Alais, Grenoble, Moulins, Versailles and other cities. But persecution could not fail to prove men resolved to live piously in Jesus Christ. At Marseilles, where the whole city had given him an excellent reception, John Baptist, having, in severe language, publicly confounded the Jansenists who cried down the Roman Pontiff, excited their anger against his person and his Brothers. By their agitation, which was carried to the extent of publishing a libel against the Saint, the community of the Brothers was first reduced to extreme want, then John saw himself abandoned by all whom he looked upon as friends, and even by some Brothers, who accused him of imprudence and excessive zeal. Thus, personally condemned in Paris on calumnious accusations, driven from Marseilles, abandoned by all, he lived, plunged in profound sorrow. Being persuaded that his personal faults alone had brought such disaster upon his religious family, he retired to Grenoble in order to devote himself entirely to appeasing divine justice, either by passing the nights in prayer, or by increasing the rigour of his habitual austerities. At the same time, he taught with incomparable humility, the little children, and, always attentive to the interests of his Brothers, he sent them Visitors and composed books for their use.

Now appeared the Bull *Unigenitus*, by which the Sovereign Pontiff condemned the Jansenist errors. John considered it a duty to assemble the Brothers who were at Grenoble : he pointed out to them by appropriate instructions, the venom concealed under the condemned propositions ; he gave them most serious warning to shun novelties, to be constant in following the traditional doctrine of the Church, to receive all that she receives, to condemn all that she condemns, and to look upon it as the most sacred obligation to obey the Church when she teaches or commands, either by the authority of her Councils or by the organ of the Roman Pontiff. The teachings of their Father were not without effect : we have the proof in the constancy with which the Congregation founded by him always showed its submission to the Holy See.

In 1714, John is recalled to Paris by his Brothers. He obeys this call, but principally with the view of finally putting

live and die in the vocation to which they had been called. He was already two and a half hours in agony and without movement, when suddenly, as if awaking from a profound sleep, he devoutly recited the invocation prescribed for the Brothers for the evening: *Maria, Mater gratiæ...*; then he exclaimed: "I adore in all things the will of God in my regard:" and raising his eyes to heaven, he placed his hands in the form of a cross one over the other, and slept peaceably in the Lord, about four o'clock on Good Friday, April 7th 1719, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

The death of the servant of God was hardly known, than a common sentiment of sorrow seized all hearts; people of all classes and conditions, without exception, published the virtues and good deeds of the deceased. When his inanimate body, clothed in sacerdotal vestments, was exposed in the chapel, great crowds of people gathered from all parts, and this occurred again at the funeral. No one was willing to withdraw without carrying away some fragment of his garments to be preserved as a precious souvenir.

And there was nothing exaggerated in this eagerness, so great was his reputation for sanctity and the esteem in which he was held by all ranks of society. This reputation, far from diminishing, constantly increased with time; for, God himself, seemed to confirm it by miracles, thus showing that it would be in conformity with His designs that heavenly honours should be conferred on John Baptist. But the great disturbances that subsequently took place in the state, prevented the immediate accomplishment of this pious duty. However, canonical inquiries were instituted after some delay by the authority of the Ordinaries. When they were terminated at Rouen, Rheims and Paris, and then taken to Rome and regularly examined, Gregory XVI., of happy memory, signed, with his own hand, the commission of introduction of the Cause, on May 1st 1839. Later on, when, in conformity with law, the apostolic procedures were ended and approved, the Sacred Congregation of Rites began the discussion on the heroicity of the virtues of John Baptist; and Pius IX., our predecessor, published, November 1st 1873, by a solemn Decree: That it appeared so clear that he had practised, in an heroic degree, the theological virtues of Faith, Hope

and Charity towards God and his neighbour, as well as the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, and other allied virtues, that the examination of the four miracles might be proceeded with.

It pleased Us however to decide, that in order to confer on John Baptist the honours of the Blessed, it would suffice to produce three miracles. They were the following : The instantaneous and perfect cure of Brother Adelminien of the Congregation of the Christian Schools, of progressive locomotor ataxy ; the instantaneous and perfect cure of Stephen de Suzanne, a boy aged ten, of deadly capillary bronchitis ; the instantaneous and perfect cure of Mary Magdalen Ferry, of incurable chronic hydropericarditis, complicated with other dangerous diseases. After the Sacred Congregation of Rites had submitted these miracles to a threefold examination, We Ourselves declared them authentic and certain by a solemn Decree of November 1st 1887. In order to finish, it remained but to submit to discussion the following doubt : Being given the approbation of the virtues and of three miracles, may the solemn Beatification of the Venerable John Baptist de La Salle be securely proceeded with ? The Sacred Congregation of Rites, in general Assembly, in Our own presence in the Palace of the Vatican on November 15th 1887, answered affirmatively. Consequently, on November 27th, We decreed that the solemn Beatification of the Venerable John Baptist De La Salle might be securely proceeded with. Accordingly, it was solemnly celebrated at the Vatican on February 19th 1888.

After these events, it pleased God to work several other miracles through the intercession of the newly Beatified. Two were selected that were submitted in order to obtain the Canonization.

The first was in favour of young Leopold Tayac, a pupil of the Boarding School of Rodez, in France. He was attacked in 1888 with pneumonia, which tainted and infecting the blood as it did, was judged by the doctors as absolutely incurable. The Director of the Boarding School, as soon as he learned of the gravity of the sickness, caused prayers to be said to Blessed De La Salle. But the sickness grew worse ; it was complicated with frightful convulsions, which affected the mind

into execution the project he had long formed of resigning the government of his Congregation. In this he followed the counsels of humility and prudence; he thought, in fact, that if a Brother were placed in charge of the government, the others would more willingly obey his orders, and that there would be less danger of changing anything in the Institute. He therefore discussed the project, now with some, now with others; at first, his efforts proved useless; but finally, in an Assembly held at Rouen, on Pentecost in the year 1747, his desires were realized: Brother Barthélemy was elected in his place. There remained another matter to be settled in the same Assembly; it was the revision of the Rules already observed for the greater part, and which John Baptist had drawn up about the year 1695. The Brothers entrusted the revision entirely to John himself, who, after giving the last touch to his work, sent to all the Communities of the Brothers the code of Rules they were thenceforward to observe. Some time afterwards, the Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XIII. finding these Rules full of wisdom, of the supernatural spirit, and of an eminently practical character, gave them his approbation.

All this work being finished, John still lived for two years, which he employed in assiduously meditating on heavenly things, in chastising his poor body by fasting, scourgings and hair-shirts; by giving example of obedience, and sustaining his Brothers by exhortations and hearing their confessions. He interrupted his retreat and silence but once; it was, when the Jansenists had the audacity to inscribe his name among the number of those who were commonly known by the name of *Appellants*. He repelled this calumny by a public letter, repeatedly affirming that he had nothing more at heart, that he considered no duty more sacred, than to remain faithfully and perseveringly obedient to the Roman Pontiff.

God, in order to fill the measure of merit of His servant, permitted him to be overwhelmed with opprobrium to the end. Being, through envy, accused to the Archbishop of an odious falsehood, he was deprived *in conscientia foro* of all exercise of faculties, in virtue of a judgment of this prelate. The news of this condemnation reached the man of God in his bed to which he was confined by the illness that

was to be fatal : he listened to it with perfect meekness and made no reply.

At the approach of Lent in 1719, great difficulty in breathing caused by asthma, then, an injury to his head caused by the accidental fall of a door, were added to the rheumatic pains from which John had already long suffered. When he learned that with so many infirmities, he could not long survive, he felt great consolation at the thought of soon entering into the joy of His Lord. On the eve of the feast of St. Joseph, to whom the Saint had consecrated his person and his Congregation, he made known his desire of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice. God suddenly gave him the necessary strength, and on the following day, he was in a condition to celebrate Holy Mass. At this sight, his children abounded with joy, thinking that he had entirely recovered his health. But hardly had a few hours elapsed, when suddenly, he grew worse, and death appeared imminent. John understood it, and wished to give his disciples his last advice, to exhort them to walk with constancy in the way of religious perfection which they had entered. He recommended to them obedience, mutual charity, and above all, respect and submission to the Apostolic See whither, he said, he had sent two Brothers, who were to live in Rome as witnesses of his inviolable submission, and of that of all the members of his Institute. He recommended to them to have great devotion towards our Blessed Lord, to unite themselves frequently to Him in the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist; to delight in loving His Most Holy Mother, and to honour, in a special manner, her most chaste Spouse, the Patron of their Society. Two days afterwards, he asked for the last sacraments of the Church. Whilst awaiting the Holy Viaticum of the Body of Jesus Christ, he had his room decorated, asked to have his habit, surplice and stole put on; and charity giving him strength, he adored the Holy Eucharist on his knees, and received with the most profound respect. On Thursday of Holy Week, he was anointed, and passed seven whole hours in thanksgiving. Towards evening, at the request of Brother Barthélemy, he blessed all the members of the Institute. Then the prayers for the recommendation of the soul were recited; when they were finished, he resumed his exhortation to the Brothers not to have dealings with wordlings, to

of the poor boy, and violently agitated his frail body. The Director of the Boarding School, however, did not lose hope: he exhorted his household to pray earnestly and with more fervour. At his bedside was the mother of the boy, who was at the point of death, when suddenly he became conscious, cast at her a long and tender look, recognized her, and affirmed that he was cured. The doctors being called, testified with admiration that the frightful symptoms of the disease had disappeared.

The second miracle happened in the same year in the religious house commonly called *Maisonneuve*, near Montreal. Brother *Nethelme*, of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, having met with an injury to the spine, it was followed by so serious an inflammation of the spinal cord that it degenerated into complete paraplegia; besides, his legs were swollen and affected with deep ulcers. The poor sick Brother implored the help of Heaven, but in vain, when his Superior advised him to have recourse to their Blessed Founder. Brother *Nethelme* obeyed, and, when he had received Holy Communion at the altar railing, feeling himself tortured by violent pains, he addressed himself to the Blessed exclaiming: "If thou wish, thou canst cure me!" Instantly, strength returned to his limbs; he laid down his crutch and walked with a firm step; no trace of the ulcers was left.

After the threefold examination prescribed by law, We declared, by solemn Decree of April 30th of last year, as authentic and certain, the two miracles submitted, to wit: the instantaneous and perfect cure of *Leopold Tayac*, of a severe attack of pneumonia, accompanied with cerebral and fatal symptoms: and the instantaneous and perfect cure of Brother *Nethelme*, of the Congregation of the Christian Schools, of a transverse lumbar poliomyelitis and of ulcers in the legs.

There remained to be proposed in general Session of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the following doubt: May the solemn Canonization of Blessed John Baptist De La Salle be securely proceeded with? The general Session was held on May 29th of last year; all the members being present, both Our very dear Sons the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and the Consultors of the said Sacred Congregations of Rites, expressed their views. We, after having learned them, and

implored the help of God, proclaimed by solemn Decree of July 2d, the sixth Sunday after Pentecost of the same year, that the solemn Canonization of Blessed John Baptist De La Salle might be securely proceeded with.

These preliminaries being concluded, and in order to carry out in the final and most solemn ceremony all the wise prescriptions of Our predecessors, concerning its publicity and splendour, We began by calling to Our presence in Consistory, on April 19th of the present year, all the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, in order that each might express his views. They first heard Our beloved Son Balthasar Capogrossi Guarna, Advocate in the Consistorial Chamber, on the deeds of Blessed John Baptist De La Salle ; after which, they unanimously pressed Us to pronounce the canonical definition of that Cause. We were careful, at the same time, that the Bishops, not only those in our vicinity, but even those at the greatest distance, should be notified of this important solemnity by special letters of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, so that they might come, if possible, in order to give their views also. They came in great numbers from all the countries of the world, and after having taken exact cognizance of the Cause, either by what had until then been done, above all in the public Consistory held in Our presence, as We have said, or by the Acts of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, a copy of which was given to each ; all, in a semi-public Consistory, equally held in Our presence, on May 10th of this year, agreed with the views of our dearly beloved Sons, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church. The minutes of this fact, drawn up by Our dear Sons the Notaries of the Apostolic See, were taken to the archives of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

Wherefore, We decided that the Canonization should take place on May 24th, which day happens to be, this year, the feast of the commemoration of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His triumph over the enemy of the human race. Meanwhile, We ordained a general fast, and We earnestly exhorted the faithful to redouble their prayers, above all, in the churches in which the august Sacrament would be exposed for public adoration, in order that they also might derive the most abundant fruits from this grand ceremony, and that the Holy Ghost might deign to assist Us in the accom-

plishment of this function, one of the gravest of Our charge.

Finally, the blessed day so ardently desired was at hand. All the Orders of the clergy, both secular and regular, all the Prelates and Officers of the Roman Court, all our venerable Brethren who happened to be in Rome, Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots assembled in the Vatican Basilica, clad in magnificent vestments; and We there made our entry, preceded by them singing solemn litanies. Then, Our dearly beloved Son, Cardinal Cajetan Aloisi-Masella, Pro-Datarius, Pro-Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in charge of all that concerned this Canonization, exposed to Us, through the medium of our dear Son Pacelli, Advocate of the Consistorial Chamber, the wishes and prayers of the Venerable Prelates and of all the Congregation of the Christian Schools, asking Us to inscribe in the number of Saints, the Blessed John Baptist De La Salle, and at the same time, the Blessed Rita di Cassia. When the said Cardinal Aloisi-Masella and the Advocate of our Consistorial Chamber had repeated their request a second time with more earnestness, and a third time with the greatest entreaties, We, after having fervently implored the light of Heaven, pronounced the following Decree: In honor of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, for the augmentation and the glory of the Catholic faith, in virtue of the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and of Our own, after mature deliberation and the vote of Our Venerable Brethren, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and the advice of the Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops and Bishops, We proclaim that John Baptist De La Salle, Priest, Founder of the Congregation of the Christian Schools, is among the number of Holy Confessors.

By the same Decree, We associated with him the Blessed Rita di Cassia, a professed religious of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine, very celebrated for her zeal in imitating Jesus Christ, her love for her divine Master, the practice of all the virtues, and by the lustre of her miracles.

We have ordained that the commemoration of St. John Baptist De La Salle be celebrated every year on May 15th, and be noted in the Roman Martyrology; and, to all the faithful who, on this day, shall venerate his relics, We have granted,

in perpetuity, an Indulgence of seven years and seven times forty days. Finally, We have given thanks to God, all merciful and all powerful, for this immense benefit, and We have assisted at the divine Sacrifice, offered solemnly by Our Venerable Brother, Aloisius Oreglia, Cardinal Dean, Bishop of Ostia and Velletri. After the reading of the Gospel, We addressed a homily to the clergy and people, to exhort them, by their great faith and charity, to draw down the favours, not only of the Princes of the Apostles, but also of the Saints newly canonized, upon their persons, the Church and all the human family. We granted a plenary Indulgence to all the faithful present at the ceremony, and We gave orders that this Our Letter should be prepared, and despatched with the leaden seal affixed.

And now, benediction, glory and thanksgiving to Jesus Christ, God and Redeemer of the human race, who hath clothed His faithful servant, John Baptist De La Salle, with the splendour of His glory, and who, in view of our necessities, has proposed him to us as a model, in order that we may the better know the supereminent charity of Jesus Christ which surpasseth all knowledge, and be filled unto all the fullness of God. For, it was because he burned with that supereminent charity of Jesus Christ, which surpasseth knowledge, that John Baptist generously abandoned family, dignity and riches, to renounce himself, and that, applying to himself these words of Jesus Christ, *Suffer children to come to me*, he devoted himself entirely to the gratuitous education of the children of the people in religion and in knowledge of the arts. He did so with all perfection, in the power of God, by the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report. And he was so filled with the plenitude of God, that, foreseeing by divine instinct the needs of ages to come, he established, without omitting a single one, all the kinds of institutions useful for the instruction and education of youth. Hence, he was not content with multiplying the number of schools for the poor and perfecting methods, but he also established, (and was the first of all to do so), schools that are to-day called professional, for imparting instruction in business and industries; he conceived and created a work still more praiseworthy, and of far superior

utility, namely, normal schools for the formation of teachers; and, inspired by faith, by zeal for the salvation of souls, and guided by his love for the Roman Church, he gave them laws, and traced out excellent rules, that served and still serve as the basis of numerous institutions that have sprung up after his example. Henceforth, you who worthily bear the sacred title of teachers, have a model whom you can contemplate, whose virtues you can endeavour to imitate in your ministry, and whom you can invoke as your intercessor with God, to snatch from the domination of Satan and of his followers the schools of Christian nations.

For these reasons, and after having examined maturely and according to law all that there was to be examined, of Our certain knowledge, and in virtue of the plenitude of Our Apostolic Authority, We confirm, corroborate and decide anew, We decree and publish for the universal Church all and each of the things aforesaid: ordaining that to copies even printed ones of these Letters, provided they be subscribed by a Notary Apostolic and bear the seal of a person constituted in ecclesiastical dignity, there be attached absolutely the same faith as to Our present text, were it exhibited and shown.

And should any one presume to infringe this Act, expressing Our definition, ordinance, concession and will, make any attempt thereon, or have the temerity of contravening it, let him know that he would incur the indignation of God Almighty, and of His Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at St. Peter's in Rome, in the Holy Year of the Incarnation of Our Lord, one thousand nine hundred, the IX. of the Calends of June (May 24th), the twenty-third year of Our Pontificate.

✠ I, LEO, Bishop of the Catholic Church.

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GUIBERT, Jean.

Life and virtues of St.
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